



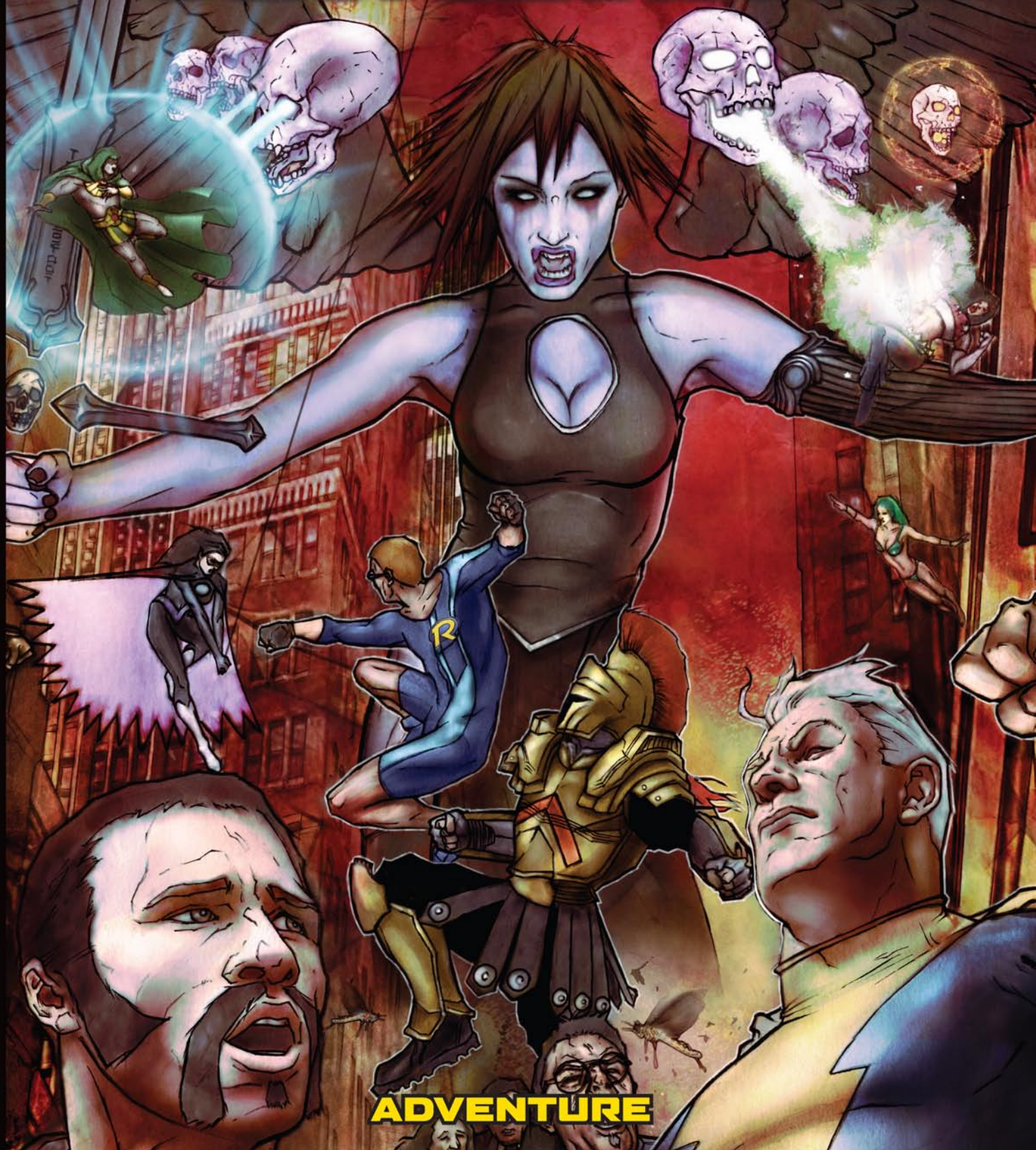
GREEN RONIN  
PUBLISHING

ADVENTURE

GRR2511

**MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS**

# *TIME OF* **VENGEANCE**



**ADVENTURE**



**HEAV'N HAS NO RAGE LIKE LOVE TO HATRED TURN'D  
NOR HELL A FURY, LIKE A WOMAN SCORN'D.**

**— THE MOURNING BRIDE, ACT III  
BY WILLIAM CONGREVE**





# TIME OF VENGEANCE

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# MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS

**Author's Dedication** To Steve Gerber, for writing scenes of comic-book superheroes standing around sharing a cold Schlitz.

**Special Thanks to** My wonderful & patient wife Tanith, Katherine & Anna Cline for giving up the guest room, and the Lord Jesus Christ who makes all good things in my life possible. Special Shout-Outs to the Roninites, especially my very best friend Hal Mangold, the witty and erudite Chris Pramas, the lovely and dedicated Nicole Lindroos, the redoubtable Rob Schwalb, and awesome-tastic Steve Kenson.

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# INTRODUCTION

**T**hey soar on the wings of eagles and move with the speed of thought. Their strength rivals the gods of myth and their wisdom illuminates the darkest of mysteries. With their heroism, they give hope to millions; with their courage, they inspire us all. They are the costumed heroes of Freedom City.

Protecting the most remarkable city in the world from strange and fantastic menaces is a supreme challenge, but Freedom's superhuman champions have been more than worthy of the task. Under the superheroes' watchful eyes, the city has remained safe. Not all those in Freedom City who donned colorful costumes and performed good deeds, however, did so with the power of Samson, the wisdom of Solomon, or the renown of David. For some, their greatest gifts were their generosity of spirit and raw courage. The

only honor they received was the knowledge that they were acting for the greater good.

For some heroes, this is reward enough. There was one, however, whose lack of godlike prowess led to the all-too-human sin of envy. The obscurity in which she lived fueled a deep and abiding resentment. When her act of self-sacrifice was instead branded a betrayal, the goodness within her perished. By the time her mortal flesh perished, her soul was nothing more than a seething cauldron of jealousy, hatred, and a need for revenge. It was then that her desire for deific power was fulfilled. Her time for vengeance is now.

One of your own has fallen and Freedom City is at its hour of greatest peril. Grab your cape and cowl, hero. It's time to save the city again.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

**I**f you managed to get the book open and are successfully reading this, you've pretty much got the basics down. Let's move on to some specifics.

*Time of Vengeance* is an adventure scenario for the *Mutants & Masterminds* Roleplaying Game, Second Edition. It is designed for use with approximately six players, all running power level 10 characters. The events of the storyline take place entirely within Freedom City, *M&M's* very own four-color Modern Age campaign setting.

Only the basic *Mutants & Masterminds* rulebook is needed to play *Time of Vengeance* from start to finish. Well, okay, that and a twenty-sided die, some pencils and paper, and a group of players who want to save Freedom City from total destruction. Feel free to add a Gamemaster's screen, miniature figures, dry-erase maps, etc. to the mixture to taste.

Gamemasters who want to expand the scope of events or who simply wish to provide more detailed accounts of the proceedings are encouraged to check out the *Freedom City* Second Edition sourcebook, a complete guide to the setting, its inhabitants, and their environs. As always, Gamemasters should read the adventure in full before beginning play in order to be prepared for whatever the players might do. Be ready to change things up accordingly.

If necessary, *Time of Vengeance* can be modified to accommodate larger groups of players or characters above PL10. The adventure's villains can be raised in power level or the Gamemaster can augment their numbers. You can create minions for the bad

guys, or draw upon other *M&M* books—such as the *Freedom City* sourcebook—for additional villains. To challenge the PL10+ characters' higher skill ranks, the Difficulty Classes required to succeed at the various tasks described in the adventure should be adjusted upwards as well.

Gamemasters may prefer to set the adventure in a locale other than Freedom City, particularly if they are running an ongoing campaign in a setting of their own design. If so, the events of *Time of Vengeance* can just as easily take place in any other large, modern urban area with a past "Golden Age" of heroes in its history. Simply change the names to suit the alternate setting.

*Time of Vengeance* can be used with any other superhero roleplaying game system should the Gamemaster and the players really want to go there. A significant amount of rules conversion would then be in order, but the plot of the adventure can be used unchanged.

Lastly, the Gamemaster may see fit to lengthen or shorten the time required to play the adventure as written. *Time of Vengeance* is structured as a series of self-contained but linked chapters. The Gamemaster can merge or add to them as necessary. If additional chapters are desired, Gamemasters must design those chapters themselves. Unrelated side encounters are one option, or alternatively the Gamemaster might wish to break the villain teams in *Time of Vengeance* into smaller groupings with higher power levels. The possibilities are, of course, limited only by the imagination.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

**T**he following is an overview of the adventure in brief. Gamemasters should read the entire scenario before running it; this summary is intended to give a sense of the adventure's overall scope.

In **Chapter 1**, Freedom City is beset by a trio of villains from the G'Tach, a group of supervillains whose members each represent one of the Biblical plagues visited upon ancient Egypt in the Old

Testament. The city and its people are in for quite a bit of physical and mental trauma, which the player characters may or may not be able to mitigate. In any case, this chapter raises the stakes of the adventure right at the start, as well as letting the player characters know just how much jeopardy they and the city are now in.

Moving to **Chapter 2**, the characters are confronted with another trio of villains with Biblical plague-derived powers. Their



abilities create a whole new set of troubles for the heroes, ranging from a threat to the culture and history housed in the Super Museum to a major citywide health crisis. Ultimately, the villains' choices of targets raise more questions than they answer about who or what is behind the assaults on the city and why they are taking place.

**Chapter 3** begins with the city on the verge of a major panic. The villains' attacks become increasingly deadly, as the Claremont Academy discovers. At the same time, their wrath is inexplicably aimed at certain obscure targets. The seeming inconsistencies in the villains' rampages may finally start to add up. The player characters can at last piece together the identity of the mastermind behind it all.

The events of **Chapter 4** resolve any remaining mysteries, as both the enabler and instigator of the preceding calamities are revealed. Mr. Infamy, the former, offers the heroes a seemingly easy way out, the very offer of which indicates just how dangerous the situation is. That danger manifests as the final member of the G'Tach, the Death Angel. The player characters may or may not be able to defeat her in battle, but in any case the work they've done to learn the nature of their enemy ultimately holds the key to saving both the city and themselves.

## FROM THE BACK-ISSUE BINS

The first of Freedom City's great heroic epochs was its "Golden Age," which saw the rise of many great costumed champions. Whether it was the Liberty League at home or the Allies of Freedom abroad, their exploits remain legendary three generations hence. These premier Golden Age adventurers cast long shadows, relegating many other costumed champions into obscurity. Despite their meritorious wartime service, some heroes of that era are remembered today merely as answers to trivia questions. Even once famous names like the Freedom Brigade are now spoken only by people trying to win Foghat tickets from the WNCC Wacky Morning Crew.

More tragic even than the has-beens are the never-weres. Among the latter group is Virginia North, formerly the Scarlet Spectre, a little-known costumed heroine from the late '40s and early '50s. Her sad destiny was not only to be denied fame, but also to gain infamy in its place. In the end, she couldn't even hold on to opprobrium for long.

Her dearth of fame and glory did not stem from a lack of effort. Virginia worked as hard as she could to protect the residents of the Fens from the ruthless criminals in residence there. Moreover, she did so when no one else seemed to have the time (or interest) to help out her poor, downtrodden neighborhood.

The prime reason Virginia labored alone was that she'd first donned a mask in 1947, well after the wave of Golden Age heroes had crested. With World War II finally over, Freedom City's heroes had begun to die before their time (the Human Tank), get married and retire (Siren), or refocus their efforts on global threats such as extraterrestrial invasion and international communism.

As the Liberty League and its compatriots began to rest on their well-earned laurels, Virginia felt snubbed, cheated and neglected. In her mind, she was doing as much good as any other hero, but she never made the headlines for it. No one in the Liberty League seemed able to remember her name no matter how many times she applied for membership.

Years passed. Despite her best efforts, the Fens continued its descent into rot and decay. This both sustained and frustrated





## THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT

According to the Torah's account, the book of Exodus chapters 7-12 (and later incorporated into the Christian Bible), contains the story of the Plagues of Egypt. The Plagues (called G'Tach in Hebrew) were visited upon Egypt by God to persuade the Pharaoh to free the Israelite slaves. The Plagues were ultimately successful, but not until after ten of them had taken their toll upon the Egyptians.

In the Torah, the Ten Plagues were (in order of appearance, the Hebrew name listed first):

- 1) "Dam": All sources of fresh water (rivers included) turned to blood (recounted in *Exodus 7:14-25*).
- 2) "Tsfardeia": The land was overrun by frogs (*Exodus 7:26-8:11*).
- 3) "Kinim": The Egyptians were beset by swarms of fleas (*Exodus 8:12-15*).
- 4) "Arov": Stinging, biting flies attacked the Egyptians and their livestock (*Exodus 8:16-28*).
- 5) "Dever": A pestilence infected the Egyptian livestock, causing a shortage of food (*Exodus 9:1-7*).
- 6) "Shkkin": The Egyptians were afflicted with painful and incurable boils (*Exodus 9:8-12*).
- 7) "Barad": The land was pelted with a fiery hail (*Exodus 9:13-35*).
- 8) "Arbeh": A plague of locusts devoured the Egyptian crops (*Exodus 10:1-20*).
- 9) "Choshech": An unending, impenetrable darkness descended over the land (*Exodus 10:21-29*).
- 10) "Makat Bechorot": The firstborn male child was slain in every household that did not mark its door with the blood of a sacrificial lamb (*Exodus 11:1-12:36*).

In *Time of Vengeance*, each of the ten members of the supervillain group G'Tach is an avatar of one of the plagues. The members' names, powers, and order of appearance are all derived from them.

Virginia's desire to accomplish some greater good. Like an addict, being a costumed hero was wrecking her spirit and her relationships with others, but she couldn't part with the rush of living a life that seemed better and more important. At last, she saw a chance to help her country and vindicate her less-than-glorious career as a costumed heroine, and jumped at it.

## ARE YOU NOW, OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN..?

The year was 1955. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) subpoenaed the remaining members of the Liberty League to testify regarding possible communist subversion by "costumed mystery men." That development caused everything in Virginia's life to make sense finally: the League had snubbed her because it was full of lousy reds! Filled with a new overarching sense of self-righteousness, Virginia eagerly volunteered to testify against the League at the HUAC hearings, which ultimately led to the team's disbanding. It was a decision that cost her what little she had left to lose.

The Scarlet Spectre was supposed to be a star witness for the HUAC red-hunters. During her five minutes on the stand, however, it became painfully obvious that Virginia's promised insight into the secret inner workings of the Liberty League was akin to that of someone who may have acquired their autographs at one time.

She left the stand humiliated and disgraced but with the level of recognition she'd always craved.

Trouble was, people everywhere now loathed her.

From that point on, she was an outcast even in her old neighborhood. The Fens was home to many a murderer and thief, but there was apparently no room for someone who'd perjured against the "heroes of World War II." She wasn't even the Scarlet Spectre anymore thanks to her "cooperation" with HUAC, which required her to go public with her real identity. For her own safety, she left the Fens behind, bound for obscurity.

It's not easy to have your entire superheroic career eclipsed by that of Hepcat (the Fens' next costumed guardian). It's even less so when the years following are filled with alcoholism, embarrassing arrests, and relationships with far too many bad men. Time left Virginia all the more bitter, angry, and delusional. The list of imagined wrongs done to her by the ungrateful people of Freedom City and its so-called heroes grew to an almost unimaginable degree.

## A DAY IN WHICH INFAMY SHALL LIVE

After the turn of the millennium, Virginia's broken spirit and self-abused body were nearing the end of their sufferings. She lay on her deathbed in Trinity Hospital even as many of her Golden Age contemporaries retained their youth and vigor—a bitter final pill for her to swallow. Before she died, however, a dark-clad visitor came to her room. Instead of Death and his scythe, however, it was a man who had an offer to make: Mr. Infamy.

As is his wont, Mr. Infamy knew what Virginia needed as well as what she wanted. Making her healthy and young was a no-brainer, but Virginia desired something more. She wanted a reason to go on living. After fifty years of simmering hatred and jealousy, there was only one thing could do that: the power to take revenge. When Mr. Infamy offered her that in spades, a deal was struck.

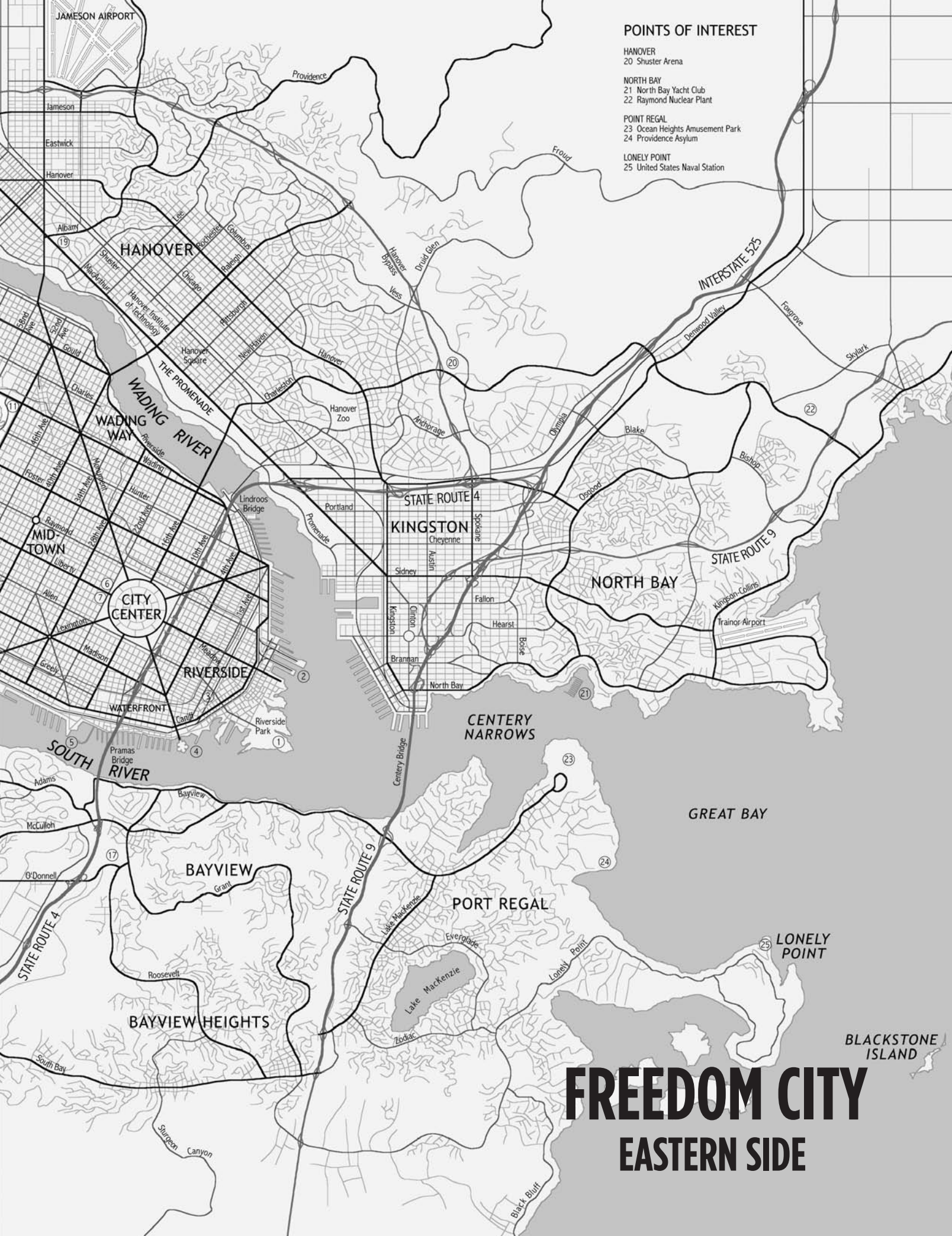
If it was major payback she wanted, Mr. Infamy proposed, why not aim for the top and recreate the G'Tach, the ten plagues visited upon ancient Egypt? It meant working with nine other revenge-minded folks, but since Virginia had always wanted to be part of a group (and better yet, its leader), she unhesitatingly accepted his suggestions.

Empowered by Mr. Infamy, Virginia has become the Death Angel, most potent of the ten members of the G'Tach. The group's ultimate goal is the gradual, horrific destruction of Freedom City. Under Virginia's direction, particular vengeance is in store for those whom she believes have wronged her the most.

## WELCOME TO FREEDOM

*Time of Vengeance* is set in Freedom City, the fictional M&M campaign setting described in detail in the *Freedom City* campaign sourcebook. Although that sourcebook is a valuable and helpful resource for Gamemasters running *Time of Vengeance*, it is by no means required. This section provides an overview of Freedom City, including a map with all the locations featured in this adventure. Freedom City is a fictional east coast metropolis in the United States of America. It's exact location is left up to the GM as best suits the series, but eastern seaboard states like Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and the Carolinas are all suitable choices. The events of *Time of Vengeance* assume the heroes operate out of Freedom City, wherever it might be. If you prefer, you can substitute your own campaign city, adjusting the descriptions in the adventure accordingly.





POINTS OF INTEREST

HANOVER  
20 Shuster Arena

NORTH BAY  
21 North Bay Yacht Club  
22 Raymond Nuclear Plant

POINT REGAL  
23 Ocean Heights Amusement Park  
24 Providence Asylum

LONELY POINT  
25 United States Naval Station

FREEDOM CITY  
EASTERN SIDE



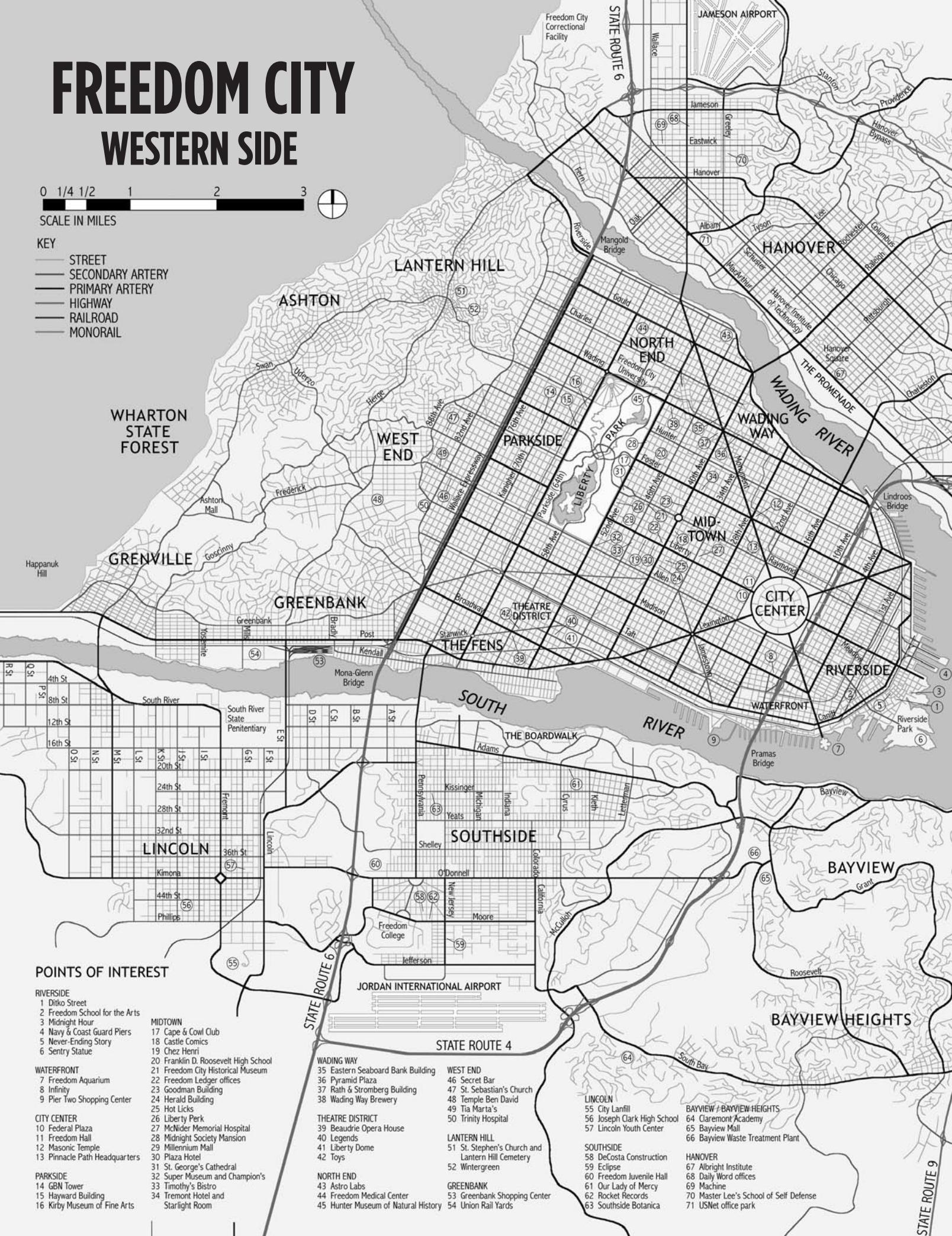
# FREEDOM CITY

## WESTERN SIDE



### KEY

- STREET
- SECONDARY ARTERY
- PRIMARY ARTERY
- HIGHWAY
- RAILROAD
- MONORAIL



### POINTS OF INTEREST

#### RIVERSIDE

- 1 Ditko Street
- 2 Freedom School for the Arts
- 3 Midnight Hour
- 4 Navy & Coast Guard Piers
- 5 Never-Ending Story
- 6 Sentry Statue

#### WATERFRONT

- 7 Freedom Aquarium
- 8 Infinity
- 9 Pier Two Shopping Center

#### CITY CENTER

- 10 Federal Plaza
- 11 Freedom Hall
- 12 Masonic Temple
- 13 Pinnacle Path Headquarters

#### PARKSIDE

- 14 GBN Tower
- 15 Hayward Building
- 16 Kirby Museum of Fine Arts

#### MIDTOWN

- 17 Cape & Cow Club
- 18 Castle Comics
- 19 Chez Henri
- 20 Franklin D. Roosevelt High School
- 21 Freedom City Historical Museum
- 22 Freedom Ledger offices
- 23 Goodman Building
- 24 Herald Building
- 25 Hot Licks
- 26 Liberty Park
- 27 McNider Memorial Hospital
- 28 Midnight Society Mansion
- 29 Millennium Mall
- 30 Plaza Hotel
- 31 St. George's Cathedral
- 32 Super Museum and Champion's
- 33 Timothy's Bistro
- 34 Tremont Hotel and Starlight Room

#### WADING WAY

- 35 Eastern Seaboard Bank Building
- 36 Pyramid Plaza
- 37 Rath & Stromberg Building
- 38 Wading Way Brewery

#### THEATRE DISTRICT

- 39 Beaudrie Opera House
- 40 Legends
- 41 Liberty Dome
- 42 Toys

#### NORTH END

- 43 Astro Labs
- 44 Freedom Medical Center
- 45 Hunter Museum of Natural History

#### WEST END

- 46 Secret Bar
- 47 St. Sebastian's Church
- 48 Temple Ben David
- 49 Tia Marta's
- 50 Trinity Hospital

#### LANTERN HILL

- 51 St. Stephen's Church and Lantern Hill Cemetery
- 52 Wintergreen

#### GREENBANK

- 53 Greenbank Shopping Center
- 54 Union Rail Yards

#### LINCOLN

- 55 City Lanfill
- 56 Joseph Clark High School
- 57 Lincoln Youth Center

#### SOUTHSIDE

- 58 DeCosta Construction
- 59 Eclipse
- 60 Freedom Juvenile Hall
- 61 Our Lady of Mercy
- 62 Rocket Records
- 63 Southside Botanica

#### BAYVIEW / BAYVIEW HEIGHTS

- 64 Claremont Academy
- 65 Bayview Mall
- 66 Bayview Waste Treatment Plant

#### HANOVER

- 67 Albright Institute
- 68 Daily Word offices
- 69 Machine
- 70 Master Lee's School of Self Defense
- 71 USNet office park



## FREEDOM CITY OVERVIEW

Freedom City consists of a number of distinct districts or neighborhoods, described briefly here and shown on the accompanying maps of the city.

The **Downtown** area of Freedom City features ultra-modern buildings. Downtown includes the waterfront, the bohemian, Old World charm of Riverside, the Wading Way business district, and City Center, home to City Hall and the towering Federal Building. It is also the location of Freedom Hall, the local headquarters of the Freedom League.

**Midtown** sits amidst the monorail lines, Liberty Park, and City Center. Among other things, it is the largest downtown residential area. It is also the location of the Goodman Building, the home and headquarters of the world-famous Atom Family, and the Super Museum, dedicated to Freedom City's costumed inhabitants.

The **North End** lies north of Liberty Park and the monorail line, centered on the campus of Freedom City University and focused on high-tech companies like ASTRO Labs. Small businesses catering to students and people in the tech industry are found throughout the area, including computer stores, clothing shops, cafés and coffeehouses.

The strip of land between Route 6 and Liberty Park, hemmed by the North End and the Theatre District, is called **Parkside**. It resembles Midtown but tends to combine the high-tech feel of the North End with the artistic sensibilities of the Theatre District.

South of Parkside is the **Theatre District**, a neighborhood of small apartment buildings clustered around a number of local theatres and clubs featuring some the best nightlife in Freedom City.

**The Fens** are a corner of the Theatre District on the shore of the South River. Originally a marshy area, it was filled in long ago to allow for the expansion of the city and to eliminate disease-carrying insects. Now a new sort of disease infests the Fens: poverty and crime.

The North Freedom area, north of the Wading River, is made up of Hanover, Kingston, and North Bay, communities involved in education and high technology along with some of the wealthiest and most influential areas of the city.

The area of the city west of the Wallace Expressway comprises West Freedom. It's a contrast between old and new, progress and old-fashioned ways of doing things. It includes some of the older intact neighborhoods of Freedom City, as well as newly developed areas that more recently expanded the outskirts of the city.

South Freedom lies on the other side of the South River from the downtown area. Parts are affluent or middle class, but others are stricken with poverty and plagued by crime, particularly the influence of organized crime. South Freedom is best known for the Boardwalk, lined with hotels and casinos, since gambling is legal in the area (but not in other parts of Freedom City, by local ordinance). Originally built during the heyday of gangsters in the 1920s, some of the hotels show their age while others have been recently rebuilt or renovated.

South of the Boardwalk is the **Southside** district of the city, bounded by Route 4 to the east and Route 6 to the west. Southside is mostly middle- and lower-middle class, but growing pockets of poverty and crime have been eating away at the community for years. To the east is the more affluent community of **Bayview**, home to the Claremont Academy, a private school used as a training ground for young superhumans.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING!!

Before running *Time of Vengeance*, try to seed these news bites into the regular course of campaign events. Some provide clues to later events while others just add flavor, but they all serve to make the Freedom City universe seem more alive to the players.

- After a dimension-hopping rescue by the anthropoid heroes from "Earth-Ape" known as the Primate Patrol, leaders of Spain's ruling Socialist Party are today sponsoring a bill in Parliament to grant basic civil rights to the primates of their own country.
- Don't forget! **THIS SATURDAY NIGHT**, the one and only FOGHAT rocks the Shuster Auditorium. Tickets are on sale now, or just keep your radio tuned to WNCC for your chance to win front-row seats and backstage passes. Foghat—taking a "Slow Ride" to Freedom City, this Saturday night only! Sponsored by Fresh Sounds Promotions.
- If you blink, you'll probably miss Freedom City's newest super-powered resident. The Freedom League's very own Johnny Rocket has been seen speeding about town in the company of a red-and-gold-costumed young woman who was keeping pace with the fleet-footed Rocket stride for stride. No word yet on who the new lady speedster is, but keep your eyes peeled for a crimson comet on your way to work today.
- Freedom City Police still have no leads on the mysterious disappearance of several patients from Trinity Hospital. Asclepian Associates, the HMO that owns and operates the facility, today released a statement saying the company was cooperating fully with the authorities in their effort to locate the missing people. Extra measures are being implemented to prevent any future reoccurrences.
- The Freedom City Waterfront was shut down for several hours earlier today as agents of AEGIS, the Homeland Security Department, and the City Transit Authority searched an incoming cargo vessel suspected of involvement in a terrorist plot. Authorities removed several containers from the ship and took the crew into custody for questioning. An official statement is still forthcoming. Unconfirmed reports indicate a suspected plot by a major international terror cartel such as al-Qaeda or Overthrow.
- The Liberty Dome box office was robbed earlier today by the Canadian super-criminal known as "the Mad Maple" in a daring daytime robbery. Dome officials are still calculating the exact loss, but it is known to include several thousand dollars in cash and an unspecified amount of credit card information. Eyewitnesses report that the Mad Maple shouted at passers-by as he made his getaway, claiming the theft was retaliation for the Edmonton Oilers being eliminated by the Freedom Blades in the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs.
- Freedom City's Jewish community observed special prayer services today in recognition of the Passover holidays, which begin tonight at sunset. Most of the city's synagogues reported large turnouts, including the West End's famed Temple Ben David. Channel 5 WXAD is marking the occasion with its traditional airing of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, starring Charlton Heston as Moses, tonight at 8 p.m.

# CHAPTER ONE: CAST DOWN EVERY MAN HIS ROD

It's a typical April day in Freedom City. A little warmer than usual, but there are no complaints after a long, cold winter. Millions of cups of coffee are poured, waking the city from its collective slumber as the morning rush picks up. People are firmly ensconced in their own little universes, focused on the forthcoming religious holidays, end-of-term exams at Freedom City University, or the Blades' chances of winning the Cup.

Yes, indeed, it's an ordinary day. Of course, as any costumed hero can tell you, those are the ones when all hell breaks loose. Though it's more "wrath of God" than "all hell" in store for today, things are nonetheless interesting. The players probably won't want to be left out (unless they're weird or something). Here's a few different ways to draw them into the day's events.

## UNITED WE STAND

If the player characters are all part of an existing superhero team, such as the Freedom League or a similar grouping, they may be accustomed to just sitting around on their super duffs until danger calls. This sort of team likely starts the adventure resting on its super-laurels at its super-base while robot servants rub its super-feet, right up until the events of **Here Is the News**.

In a lazy heroes situation, news of the attacks comes via the red phone in the study next to the Shakespeare bust, or whatever other method the team has set up for being contacted in case of emergency. If the method involves voice contact, the heroes get brought up to speed by STAR Squad Commander Bill "Bulldog" Maddicks personally. Player characters aware of his reputation (and if they don't, they get an instant education during the call) know the situation must be dire, because Maddicks doesn't call for caped backup under any other circumstances.

## GO YOUR OWN WAY

Loosely organized "non teams," solo heroes, or beginning campaigns where the characters haven't grouped up yet are a different kettle of super-fish. In these set-ups, heroes can follow up on media-recommended leads, sit around waiting for the Me-Signal to shine, go out on their regular patrol, or punch in at their secret-ID day jobs.

Each player may opt to do something different. If that does in fact happen, fear not. The GM can just start the scenario with people playing their characters in individual or small group intervals. As long as each of them gets equal time and are *always* left in suspense when their playing times are up, things should progress in an acceptable manner.

The only thing that absolutely needs to happen is that all the heroes must learn of the plagues as outlined in **Here Is the News**. It may need to be done by different methods for different characters. Sedentary heroes get the word from Channel 3's

"Action News" reporter Amy Feng (or a call from Capt. Maddicks). Characters on patrol notice all the commotion, while working-class heroes hear it from anxious co-workers. Everything's fine as long as they all get the word. Failing all else, the Gamemaster can just set up an Amazing In-Game Coincidence that puts any left-behind player characters at the scene of one of the attacks by whatever excuses are necessary.

One final consideration for heroes who've not worked together before: give them time to introduce themselves somewhere in **Chapter 1**. It might happen after the first battle or the third (depending on whether or not they wind up fighting as one group or many), but be sure to insert a pause somewhere so the player characters can exchange handles and methods of operation. **Chapter 1** is pretty frenetic once events get going, so even a short introduction is better than everyone saying "Hey, bub!"

## CAN'T HARDLY WAIT

Some players refuse to let the adventure come to them, preferring to wait crouched on the other side of the Gamemaster's screen, ready to pounce on the first hint of a clue. These people also go way off script sometimes, but in this case it's okay to let the eager beavers wander a bit and investigate on their own. It won't derail the Plot Express. If they're lucky and/or smart, they may even learn something useful in the process. The thing most likely to set off the proactive types is the day's news reports (see the sidebar **What's Happening!!**). Going where the media have already been uncovers the following bits of information, useful and otherwise.

## THE MONKEY TIME

Characters who want to go to Spain for the ape rights debate don't get closer than the ticket counter at the airport before the G'Tach strikes, unless they can travel there at super-speed. Even so, super-fast types are likely to wind up more bored than they knew possible by the endless legislative debate in a language they probably don't understand.

If they do *habla Español*, they at least get the gist of what happened: the Primate Patrol showed up outside the parliament building from out of nowhere and defeated Marmo-Set, a monkey villain (who also showed up out of nowhere) dressed up like a pharaoh. They then all disappeared back to where they came from. Speaking of home, that's where the speedy characters are most needed at that point in time, as the G'Tach's plague avatars make their public debut.

## FOOL FOR THE CITY

Classic-rock loving heroes who go in search of Foghat tickets find good seats are in fact still available at the box office, or charge by phone. If they go to the Shuster Auditorium to check things out





firsthand, there's nothing more sinister afoot than the usual ticket scalping and fat, pimply guys selling bootleg concert t-shirts.

## NEW KID IN TOWN

The Freedom League, Johnny Rocket included, is away on a mission in the Horn of Africa, a fact confirmed by a call to Freedom Hall or the Lighthouse. Unless the player characters are *really* getting the short end of the stick in **Chapter 4**, the League won't return home until well after the *Time of Vengeance* has passed. In the meantime, the player characters know of at least one place they needn't bother going to for help.

Later on, in **Chapter 3**, the characters get to meet the new lady speedster in person. They learn she's a rookie Johnny is training in the safe use of her superpowers. She goes by the codename Jenni Rocket.

## WHAT'S IN THE BOX

A visit to the Freedom City Waterfront finds the suspected cargo ship is still under AEGIS impound and locked down tight. The field agents on the scene are instructed to let no one aboard. They defer all questions to Director Powers' office. Even if they snoop around surreptitiously (using Invisibility, ESP, etc.), they turn up nothing of interest. Their best hope for more information is to go on to the director's office.

Unless the heroes are well known to Director Powers, they won't get further than the receptionist. She hands them a copy of the already familiar press release. If the Director's an old pal of theirs, he agrees to see the characters, though they find him not in the best of moods.



When questioned, a clearly frustrated Powers explains how AEGIS had "solid intel" that the impounded cargo ship carried a deadly new weapon, supposedly being smuggled to an Overthrow terror cell somewhere in Freedom City. Powers sounded the red alert, shut down the port, seized the vessel and its crew...and came away with nothing but crates of DVDs featuring the *anime* version of the Freedom League (or "the Miracle Violence Connection," as it's translated).

Powers is nearing the end of the time he can legally hold the cargo and crew. As of right now, he can't prove jack. That means both he and AEGIS are in for some serious bad publicity. Still worse, Powers knows in his gut that something dangerous really is on the ship somewhere. He just can't find it. He won't hesitate to ask the heroes to check things out on their own, assuming they don't offer first.

What happens next is up to the Gamemaster. The player characters can quickly prove Powers was right all along and that the DVDs and/or the crew really are a concealed threat. This is bound to lull them into a false sense of security, something all Gamemasters love. Alternatively, the heroes' investigations come up empty. In that instance, this vignette becomes either a red herring or the prelude to a future adventure wherein the menace finally reveals itself.

## ODE TO NEWFOUNDLAND

After robbing the Liberty Dome, the Mad Maple's trail went cold. That means he's almost certainly returned home, which would be a great lead if he didn't live in the second-largest country on Earth.

If the player characters go as far as booking tickets on Air Canada, eager as the RCMP to "always get their man," the local media can interrupt their plans with news of the Mad Maple's capture before they take a big ol' sidetrack up to the Great White North. Turns out the famed Ontario-based super-squad Team Canada apprehended the Maple just before he exploded a doomsday device that would have sent all of Labrador tumbling into the ocean.

## PESACH

If any of the heroes stay home to catch *The Ten Commandments*, they are thoroughly entertained for three-plus hours, and notice how every actor who'd worked in motion pictures to that point is in the film somewhere. The Gamemaster should take into account any characters who have recently watched the film when he checks to see if they've seen this whole "water into blood, locusts, darkness, etc." thing somewhere before. In general, give characters who catch the classic film a +5 bonus to later Knowledge checks about the G'Tach motif.

The Passover holidays also mean a week's vacation for the Jewish heroes in the group. Unless of course there's some major emergency that threatens the entire city. But really, what are the odds of that happening?

## LOSING PATIENTS

The story with the most potential as a lead involves the disappearing patients at Trinity Hospital. This path can be approached from a number of angles.



## DON'T CALL US, WE'LL CALL YOU

Contacting Asclepian Associates is the biggest waste of time. The already publicly suspect HMO (which owns and operates Trinity) doesn't know anything useful. Everyone there is solely focused on covering the company's butt in the wake of yet more bad publicity. The real downside for the heroes is that it takes several hours on hold or waiting in person being transferred back and forth between the same three equally unhelpful departments, to ultimately find out that no one at AA knows anything.

## WATCHING THE DETECTIVES

The Freedom City Police Department's response to the heroes' inquiries is based on their reputation. Newbie heroes are told (more or less politely) to go deal with something cosmic and let the cops handle missing persons. Trying to Bluff or use Diplomacy to get past this point means changing the desk sergeant's attitude from Indifferent to Friendly on the Interaction Table (see *M&M*, pg. 46). Established, well-connected, or officially sanctioned heroes get let in on the case with only the cops' palpable sense of surprise to contend with. They're stuck with that, however, as the officers just can't get past wondering why some capes would care about such a mundane (though baffling) case.

Bewilderment gives way to gratitude when and if the player characters meet the detective assigned to head up the investigation, Danny Williams. Det. Williams is only too glad to get any help to question the source. He extends whatever assistance he can to the heroes' efforts. The most useful bits of information he can pass along are a list of the patients' names and physical & mental conditions (see the **List of Missing Patients** sidebar), along with the fact they all apparently went missing at around the same time.

## A BIG BUILDING WITH PATIENTS

If the heroes go directly to Trinity Hospital without passing "Go" and paying their \$200 deductible, they find themselves completely stonewalled by all hospital personnel, acting on orders from their bosses at Asclepian. The unhelpfulness stays polite unless the player characters get loud or pushy, in which case hospital security and the police are called as needed.

Unless the heroes act like super-jerks (or all look like well-armed, hyperviolent early '90s characters), they get a chance (Notice skill check vs. DC 10) to detect the pretty brown-haired nurse motioning them into a storage room. If they follow her in unnoticed (opposed Stealth skill check against the Notice +1 of the hospital personnel), they can converse in whispers indefinitely. Otherwise, she only has time to hand the heroes a cell phone number and blurt out, "Call me if you really want to help find those people," before an orderly or security guard sticks his big official nose into things.

Whenever the player characters get to talk to the nurse (assuming they're sharp enough to do so), she introduces herself as Jennifer Young. She tells them she's worked at the hospital for the last five years. She doesn't know how the patients disappeared as she was busy elsewhere in the hospital at the time. Still, she's very afraid for them. Most of them couldn't have left the hospital on their own and therefore must've been kidnapped.

If asked, she can get the heroes computer access to the missing patients' records. With her help, it only takes a Computers skill check against DC 10 to find their files (again, refer to the **List**

## LIST OF MISSING PATIENTS

If the heroes successfully download the Trinity Hospital records, or get access to Detective Williams' files, they learn the identities and maladies of the eight missing patients. To wit:

- **Ernest T. Almond II**, age 47, Freedom City University professor; recovering from shock.
- **Bert Gordon**, 16, high school student; treated for broken nose.
- **Albert Hedison**, 37, unemployed; hospitalized for severe alcohol poisoning.
- **Constance Mason**, 15, high school student; treated and kept under observation after suicide attempt.
- **Rey Milland**, 17, ward of the state; awaiting transfer into the care of social services.
- **Virginia North**, 78, retired; hospitalized with terminal cancer.
- **Arnold Quigley**, 31, Delphic Industries employee; being treated for meningitis.
- **Cassandra Starling**, 19, unemployed; being treated for severe anorexia.

Hackers who got an extra-special good Computers skill check result (as outlined in **A Big Building with Patients**) turn up these two additional names:

- **Jeremiah Johns**, 55, custodian at the Lincoln Youth Center; broken finger.
- **Susanna Whiteacre**, 19, artist; complained of dizziness.

It's highly unlikely the player characters know anything about most of the patients who disappeared, unless one of them by chance shares a common background thread. Someone with intimate knowledge of FCU and/or the animal rights movement might know Prof. Almond, at least by reputation (DC 15 and DC 25 for Knowledge (current events) checks, respectively). Albert Hedison's name might ring a bell from his scandalous media downfall (DC 20 for a Knowledge (current events) check). See their individual character profiles for more details if needed.

Virginia North's fifteen minutes of fame were up three decades before the heroes were likely born, so it's a DC 30 for a Knowledge (history) check to recall even vague details about her. The Gamemaster can lower the DC for player characters with more direct knowledge of that era (e.g., ageless superheroes who were active during the Golden Age) as he sees fit.

Netsavvy heroes can search the Internet for instant data using Computers skill against the same DC's. If successful, the hacker heroes can potentially turn up Prof. Almond's course syllabi, a few quotes from him at pro-animal rights websites, the details of Hedison's public disgrace, or a very brief mention of Virginia as "a friendly witness for the HUAC during the 'Red Scare' of the mid-1950s." Searches for the other names just come back with several dozen blogs maintained by other people with the same names and the inevitable foreign porn sites.

The other vanished patients are all loners to one degree or another, so the chances of the player characters learning anything valuable about them before the G'Tach attacks begin are remote. Even extraordinary methods can't turn up much more than people replying "Isn't he that creepy old janitor guy?" and "Yeah, that's that weirdo freak kid," in the time available.

of **Missing Patients** sidebar to see what the heroes can learn). A special bonus awaits anyone who beats DC 20 on that same check: the heretofore unconnected fact two more patients vanished from the waiting room after signing in, at about the same time as the others. Nurse Young notes that walking out of a hospital waiting room is not unheard of, but as far as she's concerned there's now ten people missing.

Any further search efforts undertaken by the heroes either come up empty or get cut short by the events to come. In any case, they come away with some valuable insight into the missing patients and their caretakers.

## HERE IS THE NEWS

The first inkling something's seriously amiss comes around midday from the Midtown area, which is overrun by a huge moving black mass. Upon closer inspection, follow-up news reports identify the mass as insects—fleas, to be precise. After causing chaos in the North End and through Midtown, the insects are concentrating in and around the Goodman Building.

Innocent bystanders are taking flight from the area as best they can, covered in biting fleas. A number of traffic accidents have occurred because of the bugs, taking out at least one fire hydrant and starting a considerable blaze elsewhere. The situation inside the Goodman Building itself is described in more detail in **Our House**.

## OUR HOUSE

Getting to the Nucleus (the Goodman Building's top floors, occupied by the Atom Family) from the ground floor is a chore and a half under the circumstances. First, there's the simple matter of doing anything while stuck inside a heap of blood-sucking fleas. No one's safe from them. They find even the tiniest openings in any barrier and make a hero's life an itching, scratching nightmare—especially if they can't do the latter with their super-suit on. Even more critically, they're keeping the police and fire departments from properly doing their jobs.

Secondly, the near-infinite amount of gnawing insects is playing havoc with the wiring of the automated systems in the Nucleus. Because of this, even after the player characters make it there through the endless waves of bugs, they find their situation has not improved. The lighting and temperature are in a state of constant change and elevators and automatic doors are operating randomly. Worst of all, the automated defense system is sporadically firing at pretty much anything.

This gives the Gamemaster license to inconvenience the player characters whenever he sees fit. Is a hero vulnerable to cold? Make the temperature drop to meat-locker levels. Flame-powered character? Set off the sprinkler systems. Are things going well in combat for a good guy? Blast him with a stray shot from the on-the-friz security grid or give him a face full of (Stun 10) anesthesia gas. Got a hero with super-speed? Slam an automatic metal door on him. The bottom line is to make things challenging for the player characters and to have some fun, Gamemaster.

## A FEW SMALL REPAIRS

Characters with the right know-how can alleviate some of the building system malfunctions, at least temporarily. If they can access the

If that's not enough to rouse the heroes to action (they may assume the Atom Family can take care of its own crib, for instance), news reports soon follow of a humanoid "frog king" leading an amphibian legion out of the South River and infesting the entirety of the Fens. The situation there is one of mass confusion, with panicked folks unable to get their footing on the froggy carpet. Things become all the more dire when cameras show the "frog king" killing people or driving them insane with his touch. Heroes responding to this emergency face the challenges outlined in **Bein' Green**.

The third bizarre incident of the day occurs in Liberty Park area. The smaller panic it causes is at first drowned out by the one near the Goodman Building. Unless the heroes keep their radios on while they're fighting crime or are still home on the couch watching TV even after news of the frog rampage, they likely won't know about it until later. When they finally do, events proceed to **Thicker Than Water**.

Depending on the players and what they know about the full extent of the city's jeopardy, they may tackle each G'Tach member separately or split up to put things right in two or three separate groups. Smart teams never, ever split up, of course, but superheroes tend to use their hearts instead of their heads. Be prepared to run two or three simultaneous combats. The good news for the Gamemaster is that the combats will probably be short ones.

wiring (either by removing a wall keypad or punching through the Toughness 10 walls), the heroes can restore normal functions in a particular system for a time. It requires a Craft (electronics) skill check against DC 15.

Success buys them a round of proper system function, plus an additional number of rounds equal to the amount the die result exceeded the DC. This can restore a door, weapon system, communication panel, or the like to proper working order. If a character just wants to turn something completely off (like the air vent that's making the room a cool 120° F), he can attempt a Disable Device against DC 30 as normal.

Less tech-savvy heroes are stuck with the time-honored remedy of breaking stuff. Anything it could conceivably profit them to destroy (a wayward defense system component, a stuck door, etc.) is Toughness 10. Dodging a closing door requires a Reflex save against DC 10. Failure means a character steps into it face first in the best Curly Howard tradition, taking +1 damage plus half the character's movement rank (if any).

## WE ARE FAMILY

The Atom Family is on the Nucleus' top floor inside the vehicle hangar. Ex-soldier of fortune Jack Wolf (the Family's legal guardian) deduced the best way to beat an army of hopping bugs is to get airborne. Trouble is, they can't get there from here, nor can they leave just yet. Despite the best efforts of the stalwart Max Atom, the hangar bay doors are stuck. In the meantime, Jack and Vicky Atom are doing what they can to keep the ever-advancing carpet of gnawing fleas away from the other Family members.

Tess, the Family's resident genius, is working feverishly at a computer terminal near what appears to be a large mainframe. She's





deep in concentration despite the random reappearances of her holographic grandfather Dr. Atom, whose degraded image flickers like an old TV with broken rabbit ears. In a static-broken voice, the hologram repeats "Why?" as his face shows a mixture of bewilderment and concern.

Telepathic Chase Atom, powerless against the mindless bugs, is doing what he can for the Family's obviously malfunctioning robot butler. ALEX (as he's called) is repeatedly walking into a wall and after each thudding crash says, "May I help you, sir?" in an impeccable upper crust British accent. Chase's pet, Cosmo the Moon Monkey, is doing what comes naturally: picking fleas and eating them as quickly as possible.

Jack is the first to see the player characters. If he knows them already (or they've established a good rep in the city), he's instantly glad to see them. Otherwise, it only takes a sincere, "Hi! We're the player characters. We're here to rescue you!" to win his friendship under the circumstances. In either case, Jack gives them a quick run-down on the situation. The Nucleus has undergone a sudden massive systems failure. Before any of the Atoms could get a handle on it, the place started overflowing with fleas.

## UP THE LADDER TO THE ROOF

A tactical withdrawal from their increasingly hazardous home base is called for, but it's not an option for the Atoms until Tess saves Dr. Atom's program from a potentially fatal crash triggered by the base's systems failures. With all the Atom-clan busy on this task directly or indirectly, the world's biggest extermination job falls to the player characters. The best place to start is the one spot in the joint the bugs haven't been yet: up on the roof.

If the characters drop in from the wild blue yonder right at the start, they miss all the chaos in and around the building. It makes

them ignorant of the Atom Family's current plight, but it also gets them right to the source of the problem.

## FLEA CIRCUS

Whether they climb up or fly, the scene on the roof is a classic "Only in Freedom City" moment: a man-sized flea chattering loudly and endlessly about this being *"the day Mother Earth and her children strike back at their oppressors!"* Kinim the man-flea continues his rant (and the fleas keep up their attack) until the Nucleus' power system fails or the player characters forcibly stop him.

If it comes to a fight (and really, what player doesn't like his character's chances against a big flea?), Kinim sends out a "Hey, Rubel!" and sics his flea circus on any ground-bound characters. He maintains his Environmental Control at maximum radius and tries to take bites out of the heroes until they fall.

Flying characters may get a rude surprise from Kinim's leaping ability as well as a nasty blood-sucking chomp. If any heroes can fly (and still attack) higher than he can jump, he simply avoids them by ducking inside nearby buildings and forcing the hero to come down to him and his legions of tiny followers.

## LISTEN TO WHAT THE MAN SAID

Players are just wacky enough to try to negotiate with a giant talking flea, if they do, try not to make too much fun of them. Blessed are these costumed peacemakers, as they've discovered the potential key to saving the city.

Getting Kinim to talk is never a problem. Getting him to listen is a formidable task, however, especially now that he's assuaging his guilt and furthering his personal crusade all at once. From a "roll-playing" perspective, Kinim is Hostile towards all sentient

**KINIM (FLEAS)****POWER LEVEL 12****Str 14** | **Dex 16** | **Con 22** | **Int 12** | **Wis 10** | **Cha -3****Skills:** Intimidate 4 (+1), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+5)**Feats:** Ambidexterity, Attack Focus (melee) 4, Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action**Powers:** **Additional Limbs 2** (insect legs), **Drain Constitution 8** (plague infection, *Extras:* Burst Area, Disease, Linked to Nauseate, *Power Feats:* Incurable, Progression 4 [800 ft. radius]), **Immunity 9** (life support), **Leaping 12**, **Nauseate 8** (swarm of biting fleas, *Extras:* Burst Area, Progression 4 [800 ft. radius]), **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Strike 10** (bite, *Power Feats:* Mighty), **Super-Senses 4** (tactile blindsight)**Combat:** Attack +9 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +11, Damage +12 (bite), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +11**Drawbacks:** Disability (blind, -1 points), Vulnerable (toxins and poisons, moderate, +50% DC, -2 points)**Saving Throws:** Toughness +12, Fortitude +10, Reflex +6, Will +6**Abilities 18 + Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 13 + Powers 115 + Combat 34 + Saves 13 - Drawbacks 3 = 193**

beings (as per the Interaction table), and must be buttered all the way up to Friendly with Diplomacy skill before he voluntarily ends his rampage.

From a role-playing perspective, Kinim is looking for someone who's just as committed to animal welfare as he is (or can at least fake it) to tell him he's blameless for SEAT's acts of euthanasia. The closer the heroes get to filling his emotional needs, the lower their interaction DC's become. As always, the Gamemaster is encouraged to award additional bonuses if the players role-play the situation well. At the same time, feel free to overrule positive die results if the role-playing is just plain half-assed.

A final, difficult to obtain bonus can be earned if the players' dice are incredibly hot or their role-playing is Oscar-worthy. The key to freeing anyone from one of Mr. Infamy's "gifts" is to get them to come to grips with the dark sides of their own personalities and renounce them. This requires a jump from Hostile to Helpful on the Interaction table, but if the heroes can pull it off, Kinim ends his rampage and changes back to a non-threatening academic.

**BUT THEY DON'T CHECK OUT**

Inventive players may think of trying to use the Goodman Building defense system against Kinim, malfunctioning though it is. The guidelines for restoring proper function are outlined in **A Few Small Repairs** on page 14. Once that's accomplished, it's time to open fire.

The bonus comes for those who think to use the Building's Stun 10 anesthesia gas emitters to spray the big bug, as this type of attack is enhanced by his Vulnerable drawback. Better still for the heroes, it leaves him alive and well for later questioning.

**FLEA-BITTEN**

If bad luck, bad timing, or bad ideas cause the player characters to wind up flea-bitten and beaten, the consequences are up to the Gamemaster. Sweet-natured GM's can have Tess Atom complete her work and join her siblings in rescuing the player characters before things get too bad. The Gamemaster doesn't need to actually play out the fight between the Atoms and Kinim. If he needs the Family stat blocks anyway, they're in the *Freedom City* Second Edition book, pages 123-129.

When the Atoms show up, Kinim flees the scene (no pun intended) in the face of superior numbers. He will have leapt far, far away by the time the Atoms are done seeing to both the fallen characters and the distressed people on the streets below.

Gamemasters may want to teach their players a lesson about the price of failure and the stakes in this adventure. The defeated characters can awake to find the Atom Family mourning the loss of Dr. Atom, his program hopelessly corrupted and irretrievably lost after the fleas triggered a power failure. How "dead" he stays in the comic-book long run is open to question, as well as the subject of follow-up adventures.

If all goes well (or reasonably so), the Atom Family informs the player characters of the emergency situations in the Fens and Liberty Park (if they didn't know about them already). The regrouping Atoms offer to stand guard over Kinim and clean up the mess caused by his actions while the characters race off to deal with the day's other crises. If the characters ask, a grateful Tess informs them that thanks to their help, both Dr. Atom and ALEX are going to be fine, though offline for a little while.

**BEIN' GREEN**

**E**vents in the Fens do nothing to lower the current Weird-O-Meter readings. When the player characters arrive there, the streets of the already slimy neighborhood are overrun with toads. Those who find it all too icky (or strange) are fleeing the area as best they can. Footing on the toad-laden sidewalks is a bit dodgy, so the resident pimps, prostitutes, drug dealers, strippers, and pornographers are having a rough go of things as they stumble their way elsewhere. This being the Fens, however, the locals still manage to work in some looting.

As the heroes trace the commotion back to its source, sure enough, there's a humanoid frog creature behind it all. They might be tempted to laugh, were it not for the fact every person the frog-man grabs either convulses and dies or goes all Rocky Mountain High—too blissed out to care about anything else.

**SLIP SLIDIN' AWAY**

Once again, non-flying characters curse their point allocation as getting anywhere on the slippery amphibian turf is slow going at best. All the heroes, though, winged or not, are going to get distracted by people under the effects of the man-frog's toxic skin. Whenever it's least convenient for them, the player characters must deal with crazed bystanders attacking them (-2 to checks attempted that round plus applicable damage), attacking each other, or running into traffic or other dangers. We're putting this frustrating tool in your hands, Gamemaster. Use it well.

GM's are going to have ample opportunity to play with the circumstances because whatever the heroes came to do, the man-frog Tsardeia came to fight. His tactics are simple: maintain his Environmental Control at maximum radius, grab anyone within



reach, and let his toxic skin do the rest. Most people get the Confuse poison, but those who've hurt him (emotionally or physically) get the nastier Drain Constitution toxin.

He first grabs intended victims with a 3-foot-long sticky tongue (no bonus for that, just really, really gross to see). Against flying targets, he attempts to use his Leaping and wall-crawling abilities to close the distance. Failing that, he just goes back to grabbing innocents, almost as if he knows true heroes don't risk the "shooting at targets in melee" penalty.

Players who try to swap witty banter with Tsardeia quickly learn of his simple nature. He just yells "*Tsardeia!*" and what sounds like "*harries mile ack!*" over and over again. A successful Sense Motive skill check against DC 20 (or good role-playing by the Gamemaster) convinces a hero that however he appears on the outside, Tsardeia's speech and manner suggest an angry, frightened child deep inside.

## FLAME ON!

If the player characters are getting a savage beating from the man-frog, have the ones still standing make a Notice skill check against DC 15. Anyone who succeeds takes account of the fact Tsardeia stays well clear of the scattered blazes in the street (set by chemically altered folks and looters). That's great news if the team has a flame-throwing member, but all is not lost if it doesn't.

As the many storefront signs attest to, the Fens is the cheap booze capital of Freedom City. It doesn't take a lot to add Molotov cocktails to the drink menu. All it requires is the common sense to figure out what "Murray's Liquor" trades in and a Search skill check against DC 15 to find what the looters missed (or couldn't carry). Success puts a 40 oz. in the hero's hand (good for a flame Blast 5) plus additional bottles equal to the amount by which the DC was bested.

Each additional bottle of hooch added to the cocktail adds +1 to the Blast. Ten is about the maximum that can be lashed together at once, but that makes for either a Blast 14 or one heck of a post-battle party. Either way, it's nothing to sneeze at.

Namby-pamby live-forever types who don't have a cigarette lighter on them can find one with a successful Search skill check against DC 5 if they're looking in a good spot (like a convenience store) and DC 20 if they're not. Add +5 to the DC if the hero is specifically looking for one with a clever phrase on it like "Booty Hunter." If need be, the heroes can tear off a piece of cape to serve as a fuse. Anything to exploit an enemy's weakness, eh?

## OPEN LETTER (TO A LANDLORD)

The heroes' throw-down with Tsardeia lasts just long enough to get the above points across. At that juncture, he changes course and heads directly for a tenement building that's run down even by Fens standards. As he hops closer to the deteriorating front stoop, he causes an elderly man there to freeze in his tracks in abject fear. Tsardeia's words shrink to just "*harries mile ack!*" as he bears down lethally on the frightened codger.

After this old-timer is killed or rushed to safety, Tsardeia's actions and demeanor change drastically. He defends himself if attacked, but otherwise behaves almost docilely. If left to his own devices, Tsardeia eventually wanders back to South River, leaving thousands of dazed and confused frogs behind for the city to deal with.

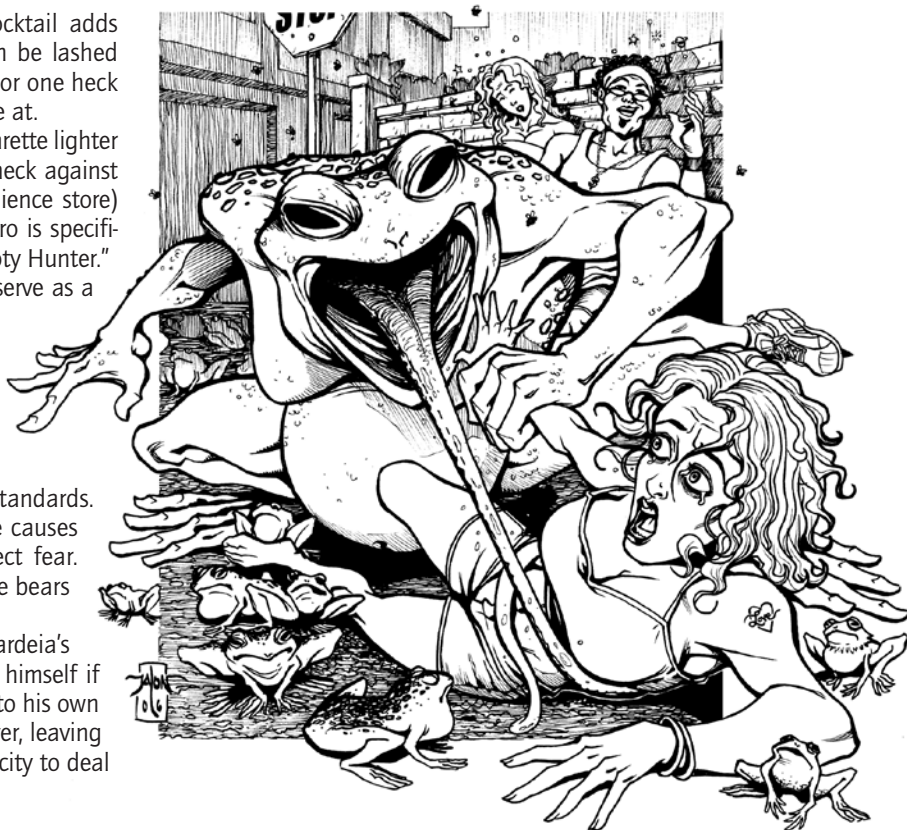
## TSFARDEIA (FROGS)

POWER LEVEL 12

Str 14	Dex 14	Con 22	Int 8	Wis 10	Cha 6
<b>Skills:</b> Climb 6 (+8), Diplomacy 3 (+1), Intimidate 2 (+0), Notice 4 (+4), Sense Motive 3 (+3), Swim 6 (+8)					
<b>Feats:</b> Attack Focus (melee), Dodge Focus 6, Evasion 2, Fearsome Presence 2, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action					
<b>Powers:</b> <b>Confuse 8</b> (hallucinogenic skin toxin, <i>Extras:</i> Alternate Save—Fortitude, Aura, Poison, <i>Flaws:</i> Touch Range), <b>Drain Constitution 8</b> (poisonous skin, <i>Extras:</i> Aura, Poison, Total Fade, <i>Power Feats:</i> Incurable), <b>Environmental Control 10</b> (armies of frogs, DC 10 distraction), <i>Flaws:</i> Touch Range, <i>Alternate Power:</i> <b>Environmental Control 10</b> (DC 10 hamper movement), <i>Flaws:</i> Touch Range), <b>Immunity 9</b> (life support), <b>Leaping 12</b> , <b>Protection 6</b> ( <i>Extras:</i> Impervious), <b>Super-Movement 2</b> (wall-crawling), <b>Swimming 4</b>					
<b>Combat:</b> Attack +6 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +8, Damage +2 (unarmed), Defense +12 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback -9, Initiative +10					
<b>Drawbacks:</b> Vulnerable (fire and heat, moderate, +50% DC, -3 points)					
<b>Saving Throws:</b> Toughness +12, Fortitude +10, Reflex +9, Will +5					
<b>Abilities 14 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 14 + Powers 117 + Combat 22 + Saves 17 – Drawbacks 3 = 187</b>					

Chatting with Tsardeia at this point is a little more fruitful than before. He retains his childlike demeanor and focus on one Harry Smilac ("*harries mile ack!*"), whom he says killed his beloved aunt. His hatred runs so deep he won't discuss much else.

As the players may have guessed, the old man on the front stoop is (or was, depending on how things went) one M. Harry Smilac, a much-despised area slumlord. If still among the living, Smilac's extremely unpleasant personality instantly comes to



the fore when questioned, as he's in no mood to talk. He's an urban vulture, living off his poor tenants' misery and not bothered by that fact in the slightest. However, for all his faults, he says emphatically he's never been responsible for anyone's death, including Tsardeia's aunt. A successful Sense Motive check (DC 20) confirms he's telling the truth, at least this once.

## AND SOMETIMES, THE FROG LICKS YOU

Tsardeia's anger makes it impossible for anyone to calm him down prior to his confrontation with Smilac, but afterwards, his sweeter nature begins to reassert itself. All it takes is a Diplomacy skill check that moves him from Hostile to Indifferent to get him to stop hurting others. Tsardeia just wants someone to love him, or at least not hurt him anymore, so any such gestures by the characters deserve a bonus to the required checks.

If the heroes persuade him of Smilac's innocence and promise as friends to find whoever did take his aunt away, his spirit is healed enough to let go of his rage. His soul thus uncorrupted, Tsardeia reverts to his human form, the heroes' compassion having done the work of the fairy-tale princess' kiss.

Tsardeia isn't vicious, so the heroes are in no additional danger after losing a battle to him other than from guilt and embarrassment. Win or lose, they are left to take in the destruction caused by the maddened residents, with the ironically guileless visage of the one who perpetrated it all possibly serving as a counterpoint. They have but a short time to lick their wounds before a passing police cruiser tells them they're badly needed in Liberty Park.

## YESTERDAY'S HERO

Before they depart, have any heroes near Smilac's tenement building make a Notice skill check against DC 15. Those who succeed discover the battle has managed to dislodge a long-standing pile of debris from the front of the building, uncovering what appears to be a monument of some sort.

If the characters pause to examine it, it's a simple plaque attached to a small hunk of concrete. The tarnished inscription reads, "In honor and recognition of the Scarlet Spectre, Protector of the Fens, from its grateful residents, 1997." Its significance may not be immediately apparent, but trust us, Gamemaster: it will be before all is said and done.

# THICKER THAN WATER

**H**eroes who scan the airwaves for intel on the situation in Liberty Park hear the dreaded words "officer down" near Sunset Lake. More old-school characters can find their way there through such antiquated methods as asking their fellow human beings for directions or simply going where the crowd is gathering.



Once the heroes arrive in the vicinity, they observe an overextended line of police officers attempting to keep the crowd under control. They've got their hands full, as their attention is divided between the people fleeing the scene and the people trying to see what the others are running from. As the heroes draw closer, the characters see and hear the police's elite STAR Squad futilely blazing away with all its fury at a pale-skinned, dark-haired teenage girl clad in regulation Goth attire.

Any heroes within sight of Sunset Lake get an inkling of why the alienated youth is suddenly Public Enemy #1. The Lake itself is now entirely full of blood. The path from it to the girl is marked by EMTs treating a number of fallen victims, most of them police officers. Some are receiving CPR, while others are being carried away from the scene on stretchers. If she continues much further, her path will lead her directly toward the city's reservoir and primary source of drinking water.

## BAD BLOOD

Stopping Dam, the bulletproof Goth, almost certainly requires a fight. Unlike her previously described cohorts, she doesn't regret taking Mr. Infamy up on his bargain one bit. In fact, she's eager to carry out her mission to turn the city's water to blood—in her words, it's "wicked cool." She's really enjoying her newfound power and independence. Though she wasn't sure about it at first, she's grown to like being able to hurt people who try to hurt her.

All attempts to talk sense to Dam are met with superhuman levels of derision, teenage attitude, and petulance. Even characters who Notice (DC 15) the scars on her body (including her wrists) and express sympathy get nothing but mockery and abuse in return. Any attempts to stop her are met with force: sometimes deadly, sometimes not. Dam is still getting accustomed to her powers, so she changes them up, using different powers over different areas and gauging which are the most fun.

She has one trick ready in case something manages to harm her seriously or endanger her mission. She will use her Insubstantial/



Speed powers to turn into a rushing river of blood. Once changed, she tries to complete the transformation of the reservoir quickly and then get the heck outta town. If she's backed into a corner, Dam unleashes the full horror of her abilities. She uses her powers at maximum area effect in an attempt to distract or frighten her opponents into getting off her case.

## STICKS AND STONES MAY...

In addition to her weaknesses to being frozen solid or boiled away (it sucks to be a liquid avatar sometimes), Dam does have one other Achilles' heel. As her propensity for slicing up her own body suggests, she's not exactly bursting with self-esteem. Characters with the Taunt feat can exploit this.

Dam resists any attempt to demoralize her without any bonuses at all, just a straight, unmodified d20 check. In addition, further Taunts do not accrue the usual penalties for reuse, so the first and forty-eighth uses of the feat are equally effective. That's the good news.

The bad news comes once she recovers. Anyone who successfully Taunts Dam gets to see her new personality: she's *way* more into hurting other people than herself these days, as they soon learn from one of her more vicious attack powers.

## ONLY WOMEN BLEED

Attacking a teenage girl, no matter how nasty and powerful, is probably not the most fun thing the heroes ever do. Preventing her from making Freedom a very dry city is a very good thing, however, especially if later events don't go as well for the good guys.

Since there's no chance of Dam renouncing her powers anytime soon, the law enforcement officers present don't allow the characters to take her into custody unless they're sure they have facilities capable of holding her. The heroes shouldn't object, especially since AEGIS (or whatever organization takes charge of her) doesn't mind them questioning her later, assuming of course the player characters are on good terms with the local gendarmes.

If Dam defeats the heroes or is on the verge of doing so, the Gamemaster has a couple of options. First, he can just let them lose. Dam is insensitive but not yet truly vicious; after the heroes fall, she completes her assignment and leaves. Second, the GM can send in the cavalry, most likely in the form of the Atom Family. They may or may not stop Dam from transforming the city's water as the Gamemaster sees fit, but at the very least they can save the heroes from any further abuse.

Win, lose, or draw, if Dam bloodies up the city's water, it remains changed even if she herself is knocked out. If the heroes were reassured by the fleas and frogs just hopping away once the hostilities were over, the bloody pools and streams all around leave them disconcerted.

## DAM (BLOOD)

POWER LEVEL 12

Str 8	Dex 14	Con 22	Int 12	Wis 10	Cha 14
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**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+5), Computers 3 (+4), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+4), Notice 3 (+3)

**Feats:** Attractive 6, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Blood Control 10** (*Extras:* Burst Area, *Power Feats:* Progression 3 [250 ft. radius]), *Alternate Powers* (all Burst Area with Progression 3, 250 ft. radius): **Drain All Ability Scores 10** [induce stroke, *Extras:* Total Fade], **Fatigue 10** [slow blood flow, *Extras:* Affects Corporeal, Selective Attack], **Stun 10** [spike blood pressure, *Extras:* Affects Corporeal, Selective Attack], **Suffocate 10** [stop blood flow, *Extras:* Affects Corporeal, Selective Attack], **Transform 12** [water to blood, *Extras:* Continuous], **Immunity 9** (life support), **Insubstantial 1** (fluid, transforms into blood), **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Speed 2** (Linked to Insubstantial)

**Combat:** Attack +7, Grapple +6, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +10

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (cold, moderate, +50% DC, -3 points), Vulnerable (heat and flame, moderate, +50% DC, -3 points)

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +12, Fortitude +10, Reflex +8, Will +8

**Abilities 20 + Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 83 + Combat 38 + Saves 18 - Drawbacks 6 = 165**

## AWARDING HERO POINTS

No matter how hectic events get, the Gamemaster needs to keep an eye out for opportunities to award the characters some hero points. Here are some to watch out for in **Chapter 1**:

- **Setbacks:** Characters who miss their chance to stop Tsardeia from killing Harry Smilac or muck up and cost the city its water supply probably qualify.
- **Heroism:** There are plenty of innocents in the way throughout **Chapter 1**. Heroes that risk their own lives instead of the bystanders' should get due consideration for hero points.
- **Roleplaying:** Talking Tsardeia and Kinim out of further mayhem with the help of some good role-playing probably deserves a hero point. Talking them into renouncing their dark sides definitely does.
- **Stunts:** Players who think to use the Goodman Building's defenses against Kinim or chuck flaming cases of peach schnapps at Tsardeia have brain-powered their way into more hero points. That goes double for players who come up with crazier (but still effective) schemes all on their own.

# MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS

# CHAPTER TWO: SEVER IN THAT DAY THE LAND

**C**hapter 2 begins at the close of a long, strange day, as the heroes finally have some time to make sense of what took place. They don't know it, but their time to do so is limited; the G'Tach has just begun.

## PICK UP THE PIECES

Depending on how well the player characters did against the first three plague avatars, they may have a number of avenues to explore. This section outlines what the heroes can learn as a result. In any case, the players' ingenuity can add a few more possibilities so the Gamemaster should be prepared.

## PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS

The least promising line of inquiry is the scientific one. Not surprising, really, given that the menace in *Time of Vengeance* is mystical in nature. Still, the characters are likely to try. In return for their time and effort, they learn a whole lotta obvious.

As it turns out, the fleas are just fleas and the frogs are just frogs. The reservoir (if Dam got to it) is now filled with blood—human type O-negative, if that matters.

If the logical types come up with anything, it's probably no-brainer stuff. For instance, any heroes who got a look at the **List of Missing Patients** (see sidebar) can probably connect them to the plague avatars. This is especially true if they got any of the avatars talking during their battles or knew about Prof. Almond's animal-rights stance going in.

Characters who went into the battle cold probably won't even get that much unless they're extra clever. They might connect the scars on Dam's wrists to the hospital records on Constance Mason, or Tsfardeia's behavior to the notation of Rey Milland being a ward of the state. These are long shots to be sure, but hey, sometimes long shots do come in.

## JUST THE FACTS, MA'AM

The player characters are more likely to get some clues from talking to the G'Tach members who've been taken into custody. Unless they convinced the authorities the plague avatars are better kept at their own suitable containment facilities, this means a trip to the AEGIS or STAR Squad lockups.

Since the heroes are responsible for their capture in the first place, the grateful authorities don't object to their questioning the prisoners so long as they don't get rough and an officer is present at all times. This assumes, of course, that the characters haven't done something grotesquely stupid and ticked off the cops at some point. If the heroes are the jailers, they may of course proceed as they see fit.

## WHAT DID HE KNOW AND WHEN DID HE KNOW IT?

Kinim and Tsfardeia may or may not reveal much, depending on their states of mind when they were captured. If they were remorseful or talked into giving up their deals with Mr. Infamy, both are quite willing to tell what they know. Otherwise, the heroes can try Diplomacy on them, just as outlined in **Chapter 1**. If they do talk, it's pretty much their backstories: guy in a black suit with a deal, etc. Using Intimidate skill just makes them both cry.

If Dam was captured, she doesn't willingly tell anyone anything, nor will she turn the blood back into water. She does, however, have plenty of verbal abuse to hand out for as long as the characters are around to take it. If the heroes resort to less-than-heroic methods (Intimidate, Mind Control, Telepathy, etc.), they can learn her back-story and mission. Like the others, she was told by "the old lady in wicked cool all-black" to perform a task, leave the city, and await further instructions.

None of them were aware they're part of a group. After taking Infamy's deal, they next thing they remember is being on a rooftop in the Fens (no shortage of those) alone with some woman in black. She scarily ordered each of them to do their assigned jobs, then leave the city and wait for more orders. If asked about the other people who disappeared from Trinity Hospital, they didn't know about them before but now they suspect Mr. Infamy got to them, too.

Even under the best of circumstances, it's not exactly a treasure trove of information, especially if the heroes aren't already familiar with Mr. Infamy. AEGIS (if any of its people are present, or are asked about him) is aware of Mr. Infamy and can fill the characters in on the basics, but the organization doesn't know anything more than that.

## SUCH A MEAN OLD MAN

The player characters may want to put some questions to Harry Smilac as to why he was targeted, but there are several obstacles standing in the way. First, as previously mentioned, Harry is a miserable old bastard who has zero interest in helping anyone but himself. Second, he doesn't actually know why Tsfardeia was after him. Unless the heroes help Harry connect the dots, they're in for a seeming eternity of slammed doors, cigarette smoke, poor personal hygiene, and crude insults from him.

Diplomacy is a waste of time with Harry, but his +1 Will save is just begging for someone to use Intimidate on him. If successful, that scares him into cooperating. Even then, however, Harry's clueless as to why the frogs were after him as noted above. The only way the heroes can come away with anything useful is to show him the list of missing patients and press for information on any of them. If all that happens, Harry pauses for a second, rubs his bald, age-spotted head and then emits a nasty phlegm-laden laugh.





It was fifty-some years ago, he says, but he remembers a Virginia North as "some drunk broad who moved in here for a while" and fell behind on her rent. At his first opportunity, he changed the locks and put her out on the street, keeping all her possessions (out of spite as much as payment). He has no idea what happened to her after he threw her out onto the streets.

The fact Harry finds all this utterly hilarious should be enough to make the heroes get away from him as quickly as possible. Even if that's not so, he doesn't know much more than what's in the paragraph preceding. If he's asked about the monument outside, he only vaguely recalls "some old ladies" putting it there about ten years ago. He charged 'em plenty for the privilege, too.

## TALMUDIC STUDIES

Sometimes the best clues are right in front of the players' faces, and this is one of those times (lucky them). The most obvious harbinger of what's to come is in the names of their opponents.

None of the plague avatars grasp the significance of their code names. They only know the mysterious woman in black told them to use them. Characters with Language (Hebrew) can translate them even if they don't grasp the full significance of the references. Heroes with Knowledge (theology and philosophy) can supply that significance if their check beats DC 15. If the players themselves aren't up on the Torah (or the Bible), the Gamemaster can share the relevant portions of **The Ten Plagues of Egypt** sidebar with them.

If the characters already knew there are a total of ten patients that disappeared from Trinity Hospital, they can now guess a new G'Tach is upon them now. They figure out that's a bad, bad thing for free.

Players who all foolishly forgot to buy Language (Hebrew) or Knowledge (theology and philosophy) during character creation are deep in the dark. They might put it together by connect-

ing fleas, frogs, and water turning into blood, or because the Gamemaster takes pity on them—not that he's obligated to. There's nothing wrong with maintaining the suspense a while longer.

If the players refuse to let their own cluelessness stop them from investigating further, dumb luck and/or GM fiat may kick in to help them. Searching the Internet is probably hilariously useless, given the heroes are searching for words they can't spell. If they ask enough people (GM's call), they might run into someone who can guess the names are Hebrew. A trip to the nearest synagogue (like the Temple Ben David in the city's West End) can give them the rest.

## A RESTFUL RETREAT

Before morning, the heroes are probably out of leads and greatly in need of some food, sleep, and time to recover from the day's clashes. Unless events took a really weird diversion, the Gamemaster should let them catch up on all their bodily needs until around noon of the day following.

If the Gamemaster wants to touch upon some elements unique to their campaign, this is a good interval to do so. The heroes can get in contact with the important non-player characters in their lives (checking up on friends and family in the areas attacked), for example.

Those who need to tend to their particular character quirks can do so. Heroes with an Addiction to smokeless tobacco can relax and put a pinch between their cheek and gum, Superscience Man can gather up more of the wonder element atmospherium that powers his gadgets, and so forth.

Don't miss the chance to hand out some hero points during this interval. Good role-playing and Complications are both worth Points, so give 'em out when they're earned. Trust us, the heroes are going to need them—soon.

# TERROR LUNCH

**A**fter a deceptively quiet morning greets the player characters, the next plague avatars make their appearances around midday at the corner of Allen Street and 52nd Avenue in the Midtown Area. If the player characters happen to be nearby, the screaming, fleeing crowd tips them off instantly. Otherwise, the media and/or the authorities notify the heroes shortly after the plagues appear.

Unlike their previous assault, this time the G'Tach members are acquainted with one another and work more as a team. According to plan, Arov serves as aerial reconnaissance, commanding his fly swarms to attack everyone else in the area (Environmental Control at maximum radius). He does this in order to scare the hell out of everybody and hamper city emergency services. Once the battle begins, he deals with flying heroes and looks for opportunities to launch aerial sneak attacks on ground targets.

Shkhin heads for the Super Museum, using his Transformation and Emotion Control powers (at varying radii) pretty much out of annoyance and spite. He was told to save his nastier powers for the people actually in the Museum, but he's "majorly pissed off right now," so everyone must suffer for that. Dever, by contrast, is happy to share her newfound "beauty" with everyone (Transformation at maximum radius) as she makes her way to

Timothy's Bistro, looking for Mayor O'Connor. When she gets the opportunity, she uses Mind Control (so people go "show off their looks") and Disintegration (so they "don't get fat again").

Except for the time Dever and Shkhin are indoors searching for their assigned targets, the plague avatars remain in sight of each other and ready to render assistance as needed. Since they're already fairly powerful individually, the addition of some teamwork to their arsenal makes them doubly dangerous. This is when any extra hero points earned during **A Restful Retreat** are really going to come in handy.

## SUPERFLY

Players who live for witty banter don't have much to work with in this battle. Arov, the exception, is chatty and self-deprecating, maybe even a little buzzed (ha!). Heck, if he weren't trying to melt the heroes' faces with acidic spittle, he'd almost be charming. However, players who can get past his habits and appearance find it possible to convince him to change his evil ways.

The key is persuading him he's got a shot at redemption. Dice-wise, it takes a Diplomacy skill check that moves his attitude from Hostile to Helpful. All Hedison ever wanted is to be a famous reporter, but since his public disgrace he's realized it's more impor-





tant to be a respectable one. Players can earn bonuses for good role-playing that gives him some concrete cause for hope. Lame attempts at role-playing should earn the players squat, no matter what the die says. If the check succeeds, Arov lets go his personal demons, and his compound eyes and strong attraction to garbage and dung soon follow.

Bringing him hope can include giving him another shot in journalism ("You want to be in media? Fletcher Beaumont II is my dawg!"). More immediately, they can point out how saving the threatened Mayor would go a long, long way to squaring his personal ledger.

## AND THE REST

Dever is too much of a nutter and too sure she's doing good to change easily. A jump all the way from Hostile to Fanatic is required, so player characters who want to Oprah-ize her only get "*But I just want to make you thin and pretty!*" in reply.

The odds on changing Shkhin's mind are just as long. Sure, being covered in boils "*totally sucks*," but he thinks his only chance at a cure involves doing as the woman in black ordered. The sad truth is, even if he were convinced that wasn't the case, getting free of Infamy requires him to abandon his personality flaws; i.e., finally grow up. Let's face it, a guy in his thirties still calling himself "Skeeter" just isn't ready to make that kind of leap. Therefore, unless a player can pull off another dice miracle, Shkhin's boils and severe case of arrested development remain.

## DUMPSTER DIVING

One of the reasons Arov is keen on getting out of his deal with Mr. Infamy is because of a hidden clause that's terrifying him deep inside. It affrights him so much, in fact, he's scarcely able to admit it to himself.

As time goes on, Arov's humanity is slowing being subsumed by a fly's mentality. From time to time, his mind wanders and his compound eyes drift off in the direction of a restaurant dumpster full of rotting garbage. Anyone focused on Arov (like fighting or conversing with him) detects this tendency if they make a Notice skill check against DC 10.

Once that's duly noted, the knowing player characters can employ Bluff skill against him at a bonus if they appeal to his increasingly fly-like nature. If Arov hears something like, "*Hey!*

## AROV (FLIES)

POWER LEVEL 12

Str 12	Dex 20	Con 22	Int 8	Wis 10	Cha 4
<b>Skills:</b> Climb 5 (+6), Computers 4 (+3), Gather Information 5 (+2), Intimidate 4 (+1), Knowledge (current events) 5 (+4), Notice 4 (+4), Profession (journalist) 5 (+5)					
<b>Feats:</b> Ambidexterity, Attack Focus (melee), Evasion 2, Fearsome Presence 4, Improved Critical 10 (Corrosion), Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Uncanny Dodge (visual)					
<b>Powers:</b> <b>Additional Limbs 2</b> (insect legs), <b>Corrosion 8</b> (saliva), <b>Environmental Control 12</b> (swarms of flies, Dc 10 distraction, <i>Flaws:</i> Touch Range), <b>Flight 3</b> , <b>Immunity 9</b> (life support), <b>Protection 6</b> ( <i>Extras:</i> Impervious), <b>Super-Movement 2</b> (wall-crawling)					
<b>Combat:</b> Attack +12 (melee), +11 (ranged), Grapple +13, Damage +1 (unarmed), +8 (Corrosion), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +13					
<b>Drawbacks:</b> Vulnerable (toxins and poisons, moderate, +50% DC, -2 points)					
<b>Saving Throws:</b> Toughness +12, Fortitude +10, Reflex +17, Will +5					
<b>Abilities 16 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 23 + Powers 61 + Combat 46 + Saves 21 - Drawbacks 2 = 181</b>					

**DEVER (DISEASE LEADING TO FAMINE) POWER LEVEL 12**

Str 4	Dex 12	Con 22	Int 10	Wis 10	Cha 8
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**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+2), Computers 3 (+3), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+3), Notice 3 (+3)

**Feats:** Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Disintegration 3** (destroy foodstuffs, *Extras:* Burst Area, *Flaws:* Limited to food, *Power Feats:* Progression 7 [3,000 ft. radius]), **Immunity 9** (life support), **Life Control 10** (*Extras:* Burst Area, Move Action; *Power Feats:* Progression 3–250 ft. radius; *Alternate Powers* [both Burst Area and Progression 3–250 ft. radius]: **Emotion Control 10** [*Extras:* Move Action, Continuous, Selective Attack, *Flaws:* Limited to despair], **Transform 10** [emaciate beings, *Extras:* Continuous,], **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Strike 12** (preternaturally sharp teeth and nails)

**Combat:** Attack +12, Grapple +9, Damage +12 (Strike), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +9

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (physical attacks, moderate, +50% DC, -4 points)

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +12, Fortitude +9, Reflex +5, Will +4

**Abilities 6 + Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 3 + Powers 107 + Combat 48 + Saves 11 - Drawbacks 4 = 170**

Look at that melted popsicle on the sidewalk there!" he can resist with only an unmodified d20 check, no bonuses allowed.

This tactic can also aid in attempts to use Diplomacy against him as well. Pointing out his pausing to lap up a spilled diet soda should earn a character a bonus in his efforts to talk Arov out of the plague avatar business.

## VANITY, THY NAME IS WOMAN

Any attack relying on physical force is really going to hurt poor Dever, simply because she doesn't have a lot of flesh to prevent it. Even so, there are a few players and heroes with misgivings about punching out an 80-pound girl, no matter what harm she may be causing.

These tender souls may learn Dever's other weak point, and that's compliments. Any attempt to use Bluff skill on Dever (including tricking and feinting) based on telling her how gorgeous she looks is resisted by a straight, unmodified d20 check, with no bonuses. Doing so might not save the day all by itself, but it may also give someone with a mean right hook and less scruples about hitting ladies a chance to do the job.

Of course, if Dever's more a plague avatar than a lady to the heroes, baiting her into a melee is a tactic worth considering. It's quite easily done, too. Anyone who suggests to Dever her skeletal form is, ya know, kinda scary and hideous instantly becomes the target of her wrath. Unless said target is out of her reach (flying or some such), she tears into them with her teeth and talons (Strike power). Granted, that's no fun for her target, but it does put the harm on one superhero rather than the crowd of innocent bystanders who would otherwise get caught up in her area-effect powers.

## SHORT ATTENTION SPAN THEATER

Like Dever, Shkhin can't take a punch, either. Hitting him does rupture his boils and bathe the striker in pus, but that's more of an aesthetic concern.

If the player characters need a little extra edge against Shkhin, his most obvious flaw is his attention span, which is shorter than

**SHKHIN (BOILS)****POWER LEVEL 12**

Str 16	Dex 18	Con 22	Int 10	Wis 10	Cha 12
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**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+4), Computers 3 (+3), Diplomacy 3 (+4), Gather Information 3 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+5), Knowledge (current events) 3 (+3), Notice 3 (+3), Profession (office worker) 3 (+3), Sense Motive 3 (+3)

**Feats:** Fearsome Presence 4, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Environmental Control 12** (inflict itching boils, DC 10 distraction), **Immunity 9** (life support), **Life Control 10** (*Extras:* Burst Area, Move Action; *Power Feats:* Progression 3–250 ft. radius; *Alternate Powers* [both Burst Area and Progression 3–250 ft. radius]: **Emotion Control 10** [*Extras:* Move Action, Continuous, Selective Attack, *Flaws:* Limited to despair], **Transform 10** [hideous boils, *Extras:* Continuous]), **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious)

**Combat:** Attack +6, Grapple +9, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +12

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (physical attacks, moderate, +50% DC, -4 points), Weakness (physical contact, moderate, -4 points)

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +12, Fortitude +10, Reflex +6, Will +4

**Abilities 18 + Skills 7 (28 ranks) + Feats 7 + Powers 100 + Combat 36 + Saves 10 - Drawbacks 8 = 170**

that of a squirrel hopped up on crystal meth. He is penalized the same way Dever is against Bluff skill, only he suffers the penalty against any and all such attempts regardless of their specifics.

Heroes can pick up on Shkhin's trouble focusing if they make a Notice skill check against DC 15. It's a piece of information that might prove crucial, especially once he enters the Super Museum, which has a brand new interactive exhibit chock full of things that light up, make noise, and are handy for distracting the easily distracted.

## GOING DOWN

In this battle, there are a number of degrees of failure for the heroes. The most visible of these is letting the Mayor (and his father) get turned into emaciated skeletons by Dever.

When the G'Tach shows up, the O'Connors are in the middle of their weekly lunch date at Timothy's Bistro, en route to opening the new featured exhibit at the Super Museum. Despite the best efforts of the Mayor's security retinue to get them to safety, the situation on the streets outside force them to remain holed up inside the eatery.

Fortunately for them, Dever's under strict instructions not to use her powers on the Bistro from afar. She's been ordered to deliver a personal message to the O'Connors first: "Virginia North ordains the death of Michael O'Connor for all the sins against her!" It may be cold comfort to any heroes who watch the Mayor cut down to skin and bones, but Dever's words are a sizable clue.

The Gamemaster, as always, can send in some back up for player characters on the wrong end of a butt kicking. To generate necessary tension later on, however, we urge you to sit back and let them take their lumps in this instance.

## WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING

After the heroes are down, the G'Tach continues its reign of terror in other parts of the city until just before nightfall. It then departs, leaving thousands of boil-blighted and skeletal Freedonians in its wake.



Obviously, beating the G'Tach is the heroes' preferred outcome, and with enough hero points, clever tactics, and stumbling across the villains' weaknesses, they can make it happen. The city's elite cops are ready to take any captured baddies into custody, and the EMTs are standing by to tend to all the injured people in the vicinity.

However, any victory celebrations are bound to be brief, because even though the heels are out cold and in nullifying manacles, the innocent bystanders covered in furuncles or emaciated into skin-clad skeletons remain in their sorry states. It's a terrible, sobering sight. The heroes won, all right, but the city's residents are the ones who lost.

## HOW DRY I AM

Once the battle's done, the player characters' attentions will likely shift back to learning more about who's attacking the city and why. The Gamemaster needs to make it clear their quest for answers is a race against time. There are a number of things going on at this juncture in the scenario perfect for getting this point across, and they're outlined in the paragraphs following. Feel free to use 'em all.

The first possible portent of doom is seen if the city reservoir was changed to blood in **Chapter 1**. In that case, even though the city is in no real immediate danger (still plenty of malt liquor in town, for a start), people begin to get nervous. The Fire Department has a hard time dealing with fires that are away from the rivers and sea, now that the hydrants are spouting type O-negative. This exacerbated fire damage leaves more than a few city residents with nothing.

Psychologically, the effects of the drought are just beginning to be felt. The city just endured its first coffee-free day. Its people are soon going to stink and will have to learn to live with it. As recent history proves, people don't deal with the loss of these little touches of civilization well. While most people wind up bitchy rather than crazy, there is nonetheless a change.

The change grows worse later that evening, when the mayor's office has to 'fess up about the "unforeseen difficulties" in bringing enough potable water into the city. In fairness, it's not the sort of thing anyone plans for. Transporting that amount of fresh water is not cheap under any circumstances. However, these facts don't mean jack to the frustrated Freedomians, who get their first nudge towards anxious. The price gouging starts in earnest the next day as bottles of water shoot up to \$25 a pop. Long lines and public brawls naturally soon follow.

# A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR

Even if the heroes managed to keep the city's hot tubs safe back in **Chapter 1**, there's still plenty of woe to go around in Freedom City. By nightfall, the first news footage of the city's overflowing hospitals hits the tube. The scenes of Dever's skeletal victims and the miserable boil-covered wretches created by Shkhin arriving at the city's hospitals are enough to shock even the most jaded viewers. Depending on how the heroes fared, Mayor O'Connor and/or his father may be among the victims. If so, the local media spotlights their ongoing fight for life.

The city's overtaxed health-care system is forced to bed-down overflow patients on high school gym floors. It already teeters on the brink of collapse when the first patients afflicted with a rapid-onset form of bubonic plague show up in the city's ERs. The common vector is quickly found to be the biting fleas unleashed on Freedom by Kinim the day before. (If the player characters have him in custody and ask about this, Kinim truthfully answers he had no idea this would happen, nor does he know how to stop it.)

There is much news coverage of the sudden bubonic plague outbreak's most famous victim. Earlier today, Max Atom was overcome by the disease while attempting to respond to the attack in Midtown. (As an aside, this explains why the Atoms didn't show up to assist the characters, or save them from any poundings by the victorious plague avatars.)

Even the situation with frogs overrunning the Fens, once almost comical, has turned nasty. The corpses of the poor trampled and dehydrated creatures are now a bloody green mess throughout the area. Two sunny spring days have added the great smell of rotting death for all to savor. Though few thought it possible, the Fens has actually gotten more disgusting, leaving thousands of homeless refugees and a massive clean-up job that's presently low on the city's "to-do" list.

## BOOGIE FEVER

At this point, all the "What about ME?" types in your campaign are going to want to know (with some degree of franticness) about the immediate health and well being of *their* characters.



We're going to let you in on a little secret, Gamemaster: they're all perfectly fine. Just don't let *them* know that.

## MIND GAMES

It really, really sucks to have your character stuck in a hospital while the rest of the group gets to go out and save the city, so we don't recommend imposing that on any of your players. That said, if someone has to miss a session because of real life intruding on their gaming hobby, this can be a handy way of explaining his mid-adventure absence, one that scares the capes off the rest of the group. Otherwise, just do what we do and mess with the players' heads instead.

Once you're done telling the wide-eyed players all about people bitten by Kinim's rampaging fleas coming down with the plague, casually ask each of the them one at a time what his character's Fortitude Save is. After each reply, roll a die behind the GM screen, go "hmmmm," "Oh dear," "That's not good," or the like, and make a worried face. Write something down on scratch paper, like "*Man o man, are players gullible!*" or "*Suckers!*" It'll scare the crap out of them, Gamemaster, and you'll be having the time of your life inside your own skull.

## MAGIC MAN

Other characters might be overcome by Dever's Transformation power, possibly leaving them very weak or slightly dead. While this too scares the players, the fun and games are over then because someone's gotten hurt.

If one or more characters was forcibly cut down to a size zero but remain among the living, they may still be in no shape to square off with any more Old Testament pestilences. In this case, just as the players have abandoned all hope, a strange visitor from the *deus ex machina* dimension appears—Dr. Adrian Eldrich, Freedom City's master of all things arcane.

In case the player characters haven't had the privilege, Eldrich provides a terse introduction before commanding them to step away from the afflicted character(s). After waving his glowing hands and making some arcane pronouncements, he finally produces enough mojo to restore the ailing to full vim and vigor.

As he excuses himself and vanishes back to whence he came, the heroes are no doubt going to ask him to stick around and help some more, or at least throw them a frickin' bone of useful information. His reply is a curt, "*You have your crisis to deal with, and I have mine. We can be of the most help to one another by dealing with our own particular emergencies. Beware—your enemies are great and powerful. Farewell.*" After that, he remains unseen in Freedom City (or any convenient parallel dimension) until after the *Time of Vengeance* has passed. Weird as it may seem, the heroes have made themselves an ally for future missions. Then again, a "weird ally" is the only kind Eldrich knows how to be.

## FEAR & LOATHING IN FREEDOM CITY

As far as Freedom's citizens are concerned, it doesn't really matter if the player characters limited the damage inflicted to next to nothing or completely botched things. The scary images on their TVs of maimed victims, seemingly impotent authorities, ailing celebrities, and (maybe) a little bit of civilization lost to them trigger the same reactions whether the people hurt number in the teens or the thousands.

Very quickly, thousands of normally upstanding Freedomians get rattled and turn tail. A mass exodus from the city soon clogs

the roads, airports, and train stations. Many businesses are forced to close or severely limit operating hours when their stricken and/or fleeing employees don't show up for work. The city's essential services' jobs get that much tougher, as the jammed roads and surly people who didn't get their daily Ginormous Gulp at the Millennium Mall severely hamper recovery efforts.

The Gamemaster can relate these happenings as vignettes seen by the player characters as they go about their investigations. Describe for them the two women fighting in front of their kids over the last bottled water, the endless miles of traffic, the rising stench from the Fens, and the anguished friends and family of the plague victims. Emphasize how everyone in the city seems to be suffering (or thinks they are), except for that one guy who walks around with that "The End Is Near!" sign. He just looks way more smug than usual.

Freedom City is in deep trouble and only the heroes can help. This section is where you get to make that fact crystal to them, Gamemaster. Don't allow them be passive bystanders, though. Give them some opportunities to earn the "hero" title. Let them see the man about to jump off the Mangold Bridge before it's too late. Smile approvingly at them if they want to break up a water riot with a corny inspirational speech. Salute them when they pause to roll up their super-sleeves and help out the city police, fire, sanitation, road, and utility workers. They'll feel better afterwards, and so will the city they swore to protect.

## URBAN DECAY

One unexpected victim of the G'Tach in Freedom City comes to the heroes' attention if they seek out help from the Freedom League. The supernatural assault of the Ten Plagues, along with the suffering inflicted on the city, has caused Dr. Metropolis to fall "ill" despite the fact that the Freedom Leaguer is immune to earthly disease. He lies in the team's infirmary, feverish and beset by disturbing dreams of the doom of Freedom City. Although the League has their best people trying to help him, there isn't much even these experts can do since they haven't the first idea what's wrong with him.

Any reasonably trusted hero visiting Freedom Hall gets filled-in on the above information and that the League members are dealing with a crisis elsewhere and can't be reached. Talking with Doc Metro is largely an exercise in futility, as he isn't conscious or coherent most of the time. At best, he'll awaken to blurt out some dire warning about "the coming storm" or "the death of the first-born" before lapsing back into a coma. The League's medical experts say they have no idea how long he can last in his current state. He may even be dying—if so, what does that mean for Freedom City?

The implications of Dr. Metropolis' condition should tell the heroes this is more than just any group of supervillains on a rampage. The fate of Freedom City hangs in the balance. The encounter should also make it clear they aren't getting any help from the Spirit of Freedom City or his Freedom League allies in the immediate future. They're on their own.

## HIZZONNER

Once the battle in Midtown's done, the O'Connors are high on the short list of people the heroes want to talk to—especially since it probably isn't clear which of them was Dever's intended victim. They could be asking their questions after getting firm handshakes from the grateful mayor or whispering their inquiries as the



O'Connors lay hospitalized in critical condition. It all depends on how well the characters did in the fight.

If the O'Connors were struck down by Dever's Transformation power, the heroes have to rely on Diplomacy skill to convince the Unfriendly doctors at Freedom Medical Center (and their Will +1 saves) to become Friendly enough to let them question the patients. Even then, the player characters are only allowed a brief visit with just the Mayor. Ultimately, the latter condition won't be a drawback. O'Connor Sr. is in the same room and talks with the heroes anyway, fighting to get every word out,

Even if the Mayor and his pop are both hale and hearty, O'Connor Jr. doesn't have long to talk (there's a city in crisis, doncha know?). In any case, he's never heard of any "Virginia North," and has less than no idea why she wants him dead. If it happens the player characters took out Dever before she had a chance to utter her threat, the Mayor concludes he wasn't a specific target, just "in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Michael Sr. is another matter. If asked about Virginia, he replies, "Now, let me see," and pauses to think for what seems like a couple weeks. Then the light-bulb goes off over his head; the knowing senior says, "Oh yes, Virginia North. Come with me, I've got a story for you youngsters."

## IN DA CLUB

If ailing, O'Connor *pere* relates the following story in determined gasps from his hospital bed. Otherwise, he suggests a meeting at the Cape & Cowl Club. Heroes in the know are immediately tipped off there's more to the senior O'Connor than just being the Mayor's dad.

If the characters are uninitiated newbies in Freedom's caped community and respond cluelessly, O'Connor smiles. He says, "Follow me, then. It's high time you youngsters found out about our secret tree-fort," surreptitiously revealing just how he impressed he is with them.

Once they arrive at the Club, it quickly becomes obvious everybody there knows, likes, and respects O'Connor in a collegial fashion, not in a "Mayor's dad" kind of way. In fact, everyone in the place seems to react more favorably to the player characters just because they're with him, even if this is their very first adventure. O'Connor has no trouble getting a booth large enough for the whole group and buys everybody a drink.

After everyone has a chance to get comfortable and take a sip, O'Connor says, "I'm going to entrust you youngsters with a little secret, because you showed me today you can be counted on. Back in the day, I was a costumed mystery man—superhero, they call it nowadays. You might have heard of me. I was known as the Freedom Eagle," the superheroic legend says, "and I was in the Liberty League. And yes, I did know a Virginia North. Once. A long time ago."

## FLASHBACK

The panel borders go all cloud-like as O'Connor recalls the day he first met the self-proclaimed "Scarlet Spectre." It was back in 1955, and Doctor Alexander Atom was due at Liberty League headquarters to brief the team on the possibility of the Soviet Union putting an artificial satellite into Earth orbit sometime within the next twenty years. When Dr. Atom arrived, the Scarlet Spectre (who'd apparently been waiting outside) got her proverbial foot in the door and invited herself to follow him in.



She wanted to know all about her application to join the League and seemed oblivious to all gentle hints that right then was not the best time. There was no doubt she was sincere—and even less doubt about her eagerness—but she had no sense of restraint or tact.

When the Freedom Eagle had to ask her to leave, politely but firmly, she seemed taken aback. Dr. Atom dismissed her (and was downright rude, too). It was obvious even through her mask that she was devastated, almost as if her whole world had just been shattered. Johnny Rocket (Golden Age version, of course) called her a “crazy dame,” and that made her leave in tears.

“The way she reacted stuck with me,” O’Connor says. He goes on to tell of the next and last time he saw her. It was later the same year, during the Liberty League’s interrogation by HUAC. He recounts the details as described in **Are You Now, Or Have You Ever Been..?** and concludes by saying, “Funny thing was, her testimony had nothing at all to do with the Liberty League calling it quits. People still blamed her, though.” After that, he never saw or heard of her again.

## AND ONE MORE FOR THE ROAD

O’Connor answers any other questions the player characters have as best he can, but there’s little else he can say with any degree of certainty about Virginia. If the heroes already have a working theory about the attacks on the city being connected to the plagues of Egypt, O’Connor agrees it’s a good hypothesis. Still, he remains puzzled about whether Virginia is “still mad at me for something that happened fifty years ago, trying to kill my firstborn son, or both.”

As it turns out, it’s none of the above—she’s mad at the city and its mayor for never helping or acknowledging her crime-fight-

ing career. O’Connor Sr. was simply a bystander, so any other links between the G’Tach motif and Dever’s attack are sheer coincidence.

If the player characters have never previously worked as a team, O’Connor recommends their staying together as a unit before they leave the club. “*Heroes have a big responsibility and the Liberty League taught me it’s better to share it. It’s always good to have someone to talk shop with, too.*”

Once the drinks and the conversation are all done, O’Connor gives his contact information to the heroes in case he can be of further help and wishes them luck. Just before they leave, he says, “*You know, Johnny Wade and I get together here every Friday night with some of the other old timers from the Liberty League. We have some drinks and tell old stories. Maybe after you youngsters wrap up this case you’d all like to join us sometime?*”

If the characters are smart enough to say yes, they’ve made yet another group of friends in Freedom City and now have access to the most wise and experienced heroes in the business. Just as importantly, O’Connor’s final words take for granted they’re going to save the day. The full significance of getting a vote of confidence from one of Freedom City’s first heroes should not be lost on any of them.

## PHANTOM LADY

Once the player characters connect Virginia North to the Scarlet Spectre, they are likely to look for more details on her costumed crime-fighting career. Print-wise, there are some newspaper accounts from the same period of her HUAC testimony and the public backlash it caused. After that there are only intermittent mentions of Virginia, all one-paragraph blurbs about public drunkenness and violent public quarrels with a series of abusive boyfriends. Even these notices stop appearing after late 1960.

City records (if the players can access them) pick up a trail of rapidly changing residences from then until 1993, when the Freedom City Retirement Castle and Trinity Hospital become her permanent addresses. Checking out the Retirement Castle acquaints them with **The Little Old Lady** (and maybe **One** as well). A visit to Trinity Hospital takes the narrative back to **A Big Building with Patients**.

An Internet search yields one useful hit amongst all the links to overseas cyber-porn. In the archives at the Millennium Comics store website is a 2004 interview with a local comic-book artist named Darren Calvert. In it, Calvert is asked about creating a character called “the Red Phantom” for Castle Comics.

Calvert says the inspiration came while looking for art references in old newspapers and finding a picture of someone called “the Scarlet Spectre.” He thought she had a “classic, Bettie Page look” and “a great costume,” so he based the Red Phantom’s appearance on her. Since then, the comic has sold fairly well and Red Phantom merchandise has done even better.

## SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS

At some point, the heroes may want to track down Darren Calvert. Since Castle Comics has shut down during the crisis, this can be done most easily through the Millennium Comics store. It resolutely stays open throughout *Time of Vengeance*. Owner Jerry Webster is very happy to help any established costumed heroes who ask (that is, after all, living every comics fan’s dream).

If the player characters visit the store in person, they notice quite a few Red Phantom items on sale: t-shirts, action figures, clicking-base game pieces, trade paperback collections, etc. These





items are just background color now, but they could be city saving in **Chapter 4**.

Darren lives in an apartment in Riverside. With no thoughts of fleeing the current crisis (*"Hey, I've got a deadline!"*), he is home when the heroes come to visit. He has quite a bit of Red Phantom merchandise on display (*"for reference"*), as well as photocopies of the 1955 newspaper article that inspired the character. The picture wowed him so much he's never read the attached story all that closely, but he's happy to let the player characters do so.

If the heroes haven't already learned it by any other method before, they now discover about Virginia North's public disgrace and the end of her time as the Scarlet Spectre. More importantly, they have solid evidence she hasn't been totally forgotten, which becomes crucial later on.

## MUSEUM PIECES

With so many clues pointing towards Freedom City's superheroic past, it's only natural for the player characters to be drawn to the Super Museum at some point. The place might be a bit of a mess after Shkhin's attack, as well as being undermanned if the avatar got close enough to use his powers on the staff. However, the museum's director Dr. Jerry B.R. Thomas is quite well and can spare some time to chat (he was driving back from the airport with a Cal-Berkeley professor, here to do a retrospective seminar on Hepcat, and missed the Midtown battle).

If the player characters are aware of Virginia's life as the Scarlet Spectre, an exasperated Dr. Thomas admits they know far more than he does. He's quite willing to let the heroes look through the archives, but beyond one dusty newspaper story about Virginia's HUAC testimony, there is no sign of her anywhere in the Super Museum.

This is a bit ironic, because the museum's current featured exhibit is *"A Tribute to Heroes: The Story of Freedom City's Golden Age 'Mystery Men.'"* The Scarlet Spectre is entirely absent from it and seems to be the only hero from the entire era with that dubious distinction. This realization lets the characters know just how obscure the Scarlet Spectre was and is. It may give them some insight on why Virginia bears the institution a grudge.

## THE RETURN OF SUPERFLY

Lastly, the player characters can try a little Good Cop-Bad Cop with any plague avatars they captured. With Dever, it's a waste of time. She just looks about the room in a daze, repeating how a man made her pretty and a woman in black told her to do the same for everybody else. She's already forgotten all the other specifics.

Shkhin remains a butt-head so Diplomacy does little good with him. Intimidation, on the other hand, works just fine, especially against a guy who goes into agony from a simple finger poke. Between cries of anguish and declaring *"this whole thing sucks!"* he can relate his back-story and some sketchy details about how *"there was this one dude in black"* who changed his form. The next thing he knew *"some spooky hot chick"* standing atop a *"crap-hole building"* told him to *"go mess up the people in the capes museum,"* and then stay out of the city until he got more orders.

Arov (possibly back to being Al Hedison) is overcome with remorse. He honestly didn't know so many innocent people were going to suffer. Worse for him, he didn't care until it was far too late. Sure, he could legitimately blame it all on the bottle, but he's sick and tired of that excuse.

Regardless of what's gone before, he's ready to tell the authorities (heroes included) anything they want to know. Unfortunately, his booze-clouded mind doesn't retain much. Hedison went on a bender and woke up a giant fly (*"kinda like Kafka, only with grain alcohol"*). He was still hung-over when he awoke *"somewhere"* and *"the woman in black"* laid out the battle plan for them. After that, he *"just went with it."* Post-attack he was supposed to wing his way out of the city, and then the lady would get further instructions to him. That's pretty much the extent of his knowledge. Before the heroes depart, they can try to talk Hedison into giving up his dark side (if they didn't do so earlier), using the same guidelines from **Superfly**.

## PATTERNS

As the second day of G'Tach's reign of terror comes to a close, the player characters may have put together all or none of the patterns the group's attacks follow. If they know their Torah (or Bible)—or know someone who does—they have some idea of the powers possessed by the plague avatars yet to come. Very clever (or lucky) heroes may have already deduced each G'Tach member has a weakness. Coupled with the Biblical foreknowledge, they can make some good guesses as to how to exploit the Achilles' heels of the ones who've yet to appear.

Hopefully, they've learned enough about Virginia North and her history to suspect she's who they're up against and why that's so. (They may also know about Mr. Infamy's involvement as well, but there's not much further use to be made of that info). Knowing their enemy and the types of targets struck—the city itself, heroes active in the 1950s, their (firstborn male) children, and people who've personally wronged Virginia—they can put it all together or none of it. Just be prepared for the latter, Gamemaster, or you just might find the players way behind intel-wise come **Chapter 3**.

## AWARDING HERO POINTS

Just as a friendly reminder, heroes need hero points like the flowers need the rain. Don't forget to sprinkle a few on them as events progress, m'kay? Here are some possibilities for **Chapter 2**:

- **Setbacks:** Any character who had a chance to stop Dever from putting the Mayor (and the retired Freedom Eagle) into intensive care and then screwed it up stone cold *needs* a hero point.
- **Heroism:** This is the chapter where the characters realize they're in a race against time. Those who still spare some sand for random acts of kindness (breaking up fights in store queues, luring Dever into a melee attack on their persons, etc.) need to be recognized and rewarded for giving something back to the community, superhero style.
- **Roleplaying:** Any character crazy enough to talk to a giant fly about his personal problems and then help him make a Dr. Phil-style breakthrough deserves a hero point *and* their own daily afternoon talk show.
- **Stunts:** Complimenting Dever into submission, using the Museum displays to befuddle Shkhin, or something even more worthy of Hannibal (or "Hannibal" Smith, at least) garners a hero point. Players love it when a plan comes together...
- **Confidence:** If the heroes talked to the Freedom Eagle and earned a vote of confidence from the Golden Age hero, give them each a hero point to represent the resulting ego-boost.

# CHAPTER THREE: SO THAT THE LAND WAS DARKENED

**C**hapter 3 begins with Freedom City facing destruction by the G'Tach—that is, if the city doesn't destroy itself first. With key members of the Atom Family down, the gone-global Freedom League tending to matters on another continent, and major troubles coming the Next-Gen's unsuspecting way, Freedom's future is squarely in the hands of the player characters. The penultimate chapter of *Time of Vengeance* sets the stage for a battle that decides Freedom's fate and features a pretty good scrap of its own. It is also the last chance for the heroes to figure out the nature of the enemy if they've blown all their previous opportunities to do so.

## A LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

The players start the day with their hands full, dealing with whatever personal ordeals have arisen because of recent events and a city on the brink. After a whole night to absorb the images of a worsening crisis situation, the day following the attack on Midtown begins with still more people opting not to be frosty in the clutch. Of course, it's not like their alignment change to "chaotic stupid and panicky" is totally without cause.

If the drought came to pass, media reports begin to document shootings over bags of ice. The victims of said violence have to be treated on the spot as the hospitals continue to be overwhelmed by people who've contracted the bubonic plague. Newly afflicted people stream into ERs throughout the afternoon.

Much to the chagrin of the city authorities, camcorder footage of stacked-up body bags outside area hospitals is posted on various Internet hosting sites. The shaky footage is a jarring sight. As more and more fragile bodies succumb to severe malnutrition and the ravages of plague, the sight is unfortunately repeated many times. Indeed, things are likely to get a good deal worse.

Whereas the day before traffic out of Freedom City had slowed to a crawl, today it has stopped completely thanks to the additional people fleeing. By the afternoon, images from overseas wars appear live and in living color in Freedom City: families leave the city on foot with whatever they can carry on their backs.

The city's greatest concentration of surliness is now in the Liberty Dome, which has been hastily (and rather ineffectively) turned into a shelter for the many who fled the unsanitary conditions in the Fens. Space, water, food, clothing—all the essentials—are in short supply, making this by far the gravest crisis ever faced by Freedom City's strippers and erotic novelty dealers. That's not to mention all the down-on-their-luck types who now look back on their time living in Freedom's very own hellhole as their salad days.

## RAY OF LIGHT

To keep the heroes from getting too bummed out, the Gamemaster may want to make sure they see the following TV report before

they go out to do more super stuff. Consider this scene their locker room pep talk.

An overeager cable news reporter shoves an unwelcome microphone in the face of an obviously stressed nurse at Trinity Hospital. Inquisitive player characters recognize her as their benefactor from **Chapter 1** (in **A Big Building with Patients**), Jennifer Young. Cable-News Guy tries to fill up some of his network's 24 hours of airtime by asking the busy health care professional, "Do you think the city will be able to handle the current crisis?" to which she unhesitatingly replies, "Yes, because our heroes always come through for us. I believe in them."

No sooner do the player characters receive this beacon of hope than they get a less cheery piece of news. Some loon is pelting the City Center with a storm of flaming hail. For the heroes, it looks like a job for their-names-here.

## TRAVELIN' BAND

Unless the heroes are going by air, teleportation, or burrowing underground, they are in for a long, difficult journey to the City Center. Even the people who want to get out of their way simply can't, given the traffic conditions. Ultimately, the delay makes no difference in how this scene progresses, but the players (who don't know this) once again get a feel of a city crumbling around them. Not so much the buildings, mind you, but the Freedomians are giving up on their homes and losing faith in anyone's power to save them.

If they wing it instead (which is the safest way to travel, you know), the endless rows of immobile cars and increasingly desperate people make for a sobering sight. The heroes may draw some small bit of inspiration from the scattered cheers they get, even the ones where the people mistakenly call out the names of other Freedom City heroes.

Upon arrival in the City Center, the situation quickly becomes clear—if really, really odd. There is indeed a steady, driving barrage of grapefruit-sized hail pounding the vicinity. For reasons known only to magic, the balls of ice are aflame. The icy part of the barrage is shattering car windshields, building windows and peoples' noggins in equal measure. All the blood and glass everywhere are triggering the level of panic one would expect, but the fires are thus far confined to a few trashcans.

This is (among other things) undoing the work of the Freedom City Police, who had managed to divert traffic flow from this area. Now, thanks to the icy marbles, it's just as hard to get where you're going in the City Center as anywhere else in town. This, plus the injured terrified folk and scattered blazes, gives the Gamemaster plenty of chances for bystander jeopardy in the event things go too well for the heroes during the skirmish to come.





# THE ICE STORM

Number seven on the Egyptian plague countdown is Barad. She hovers above Freedom Hall, calling Johnny Wade to come forth and “pay for his sins.” It would all be very dramatic and not a little intimidating, were it not for the fact neither of the famous Freedomians bearing that name are present. The first (a.k.a. the Golden Age Johnny Rocket) never took up residence there. The second (a.k.a. the current Johnny Rocket) is off on a mission. If any of the heroes know this, it should be a great relief to them, as that gives them confirmation that despite their power, the G’Tach’s intelligence is not flawless. The characters haven’t much time to chuckle, though; a lot of innocent people are getting hurt.

When matters progress to fisticuffs, Barad switches from her Environmental Controls to the Snare power. She’s far from non-violent, but she’s a bit confused why Johnny Wade hasn’t shown up yet. Since she kinda told her boss Virginia North she knew where he lived, her butt’s on the line. She wants some prisoners to interrogate for directions to the Wade residence.

Once it becomes clear to everyone (including herself) she can’t find the proper address, Barad throws a temper tantrum and moves on to her more lethal abilities. She uses her Blast to injure bystanders and her Drain to topple nearby large structures. This continues until the heroes get the upper hand or her flightiness takes over. Fortunately, one situation or the other prevails before Barad injures too many people seriously.

If the battle turns against her, Barad changes over to her Obscure power and tries to fly her way to safety. She is not above taking a hostage, and her own prior actions soon inadvertently deliver a prime candidate for this role right into her hands.

## ROCKETTE

Talking to Barad is like talking to a grown toddler, one that’s the absolute worst kind of brat. This not only makes speaking with her

one of the most annoying experiences of any hero’s career, but it gets under people’s skin. Unfortunately for a city that’s already been through so much, the media move in to cover the battle once the hailstorm ceases and broadcasts her prattle to a captive audience. One person among them in particular, home from school on a plague break, takes umbrage to Barad’s commentary, and resolves to do something about it.

As fast as Mach 3 speed can carry her, Jenni Rocket appears on the scene ready and eager to avenge all insults directed at her mentor. There’s nothing wrong with sticking up for an absent friend, but Jenni’s in way over her head in this battle. Even worse, Jenni completely misread Barad’s threats. The plague avatar is gunning for the senior Wade to pay him back for the “sin” of hurting Virginia’s feelings fifty years ago. Jenni, on the other hand, thinks Barad is some crazy homophobe trying to kill the younger Johnny because of his sexual orientation, something that offends Jenni to the core of her being.

Angry as she is, Jenni can serve two important roles in this scene. If things are going well for the player characters, Jenni can let her rage blind her into making a rookie mistake and wind up a hostage to Barad. This puts rescuing her squarely on the heroes, their powers, and their ingenuity, and that’s always fun for everyone. Bear in mind, however, that Barad’s threats against Jenni are very real. She’s childishly vicious. In any case, she would find it easy to believe that her best chance for appeasing her boss in the absence of killing *the* J. Rocket is to kill *a* J. Rocket.

On the other hand, if the player characters need saving, an outraged super-speedster can be just the thing to scare the infantile Barad away. This outcome surprises Jenni more than anyone (once she calms down), but it does save the heroes and the City Center from further harm. It’s also one more nudge for Jenni towards taking up super-heroing.

## A HOT TIME IN THE OLD TOWN TONIGHT

Most comic-book fans and experienced *M&M* players (and you’re probably staring over your screen at plenty of both, Gamemaster) can guess the weakness of an ice & cold-based character is fire and heat. If the player character’s team includes one or more members with those kinds of powers, the battle with Barad can

### BARAD (HAIL)

POWER LEVEL 12

**Str 12** **Dex 18** **Con 22** **Int 12** **Wis 12** **Cha 20**

**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+9), Craft (artistic) 4 (+5), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+5)

**Feats:** Attractive 4, Distract, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action, Taunt

**Powers:** **Cold Control 12** (Alternate Powers: **Blast 10** [cold/ice, Extras: Burst Area, Flaws: Touch Range, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000’ radius], **Create Object 12** [ice shapes], **Drain Toughness 12** [Extras: Ranged, Flaws: Limited to objects], **Environmental Control 12** [hailstorm, DC 10 distraction], **Environmental Control 12** [ice storm, DC 10 hamper movement], **Obscure 10** [visual, blinding snow, Extras: Burst Area, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000 ft. radius], **Snare 10** [ice bonds, Extras: Burst Area, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000 ft. radius]), **Flight 4**, **Immunity 9** (life support), **Protection 6** (Extras: Impervious)

**Combat:** Attack +12, Grapple +13, Damage +10 (Blast), +1 (unarmed), Defense +12, Knockback –9, Initiative +12

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (heat and flame, moderate, +50% DC, –3 points)

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +12, Fortitude +10, Reflex +8, Will +4

**Abilities 36 + Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 77 + Combat 48 + Saves 12 = 185**

### JENNI ROCKET

POWER LEVEL 8

**Str 12** **Dex 16** **Con 12** **Int 14** **Wis 12** **Cha 12**

**Skills:** Acrobatics 4 (+7), Disable Device 6 (+8), Knowledge (history) 6 (+8), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (teacher) 7 (+8), Search 7 (+9)

**Feats:** Dodge Focus 4, Evasion, Instant Up, Move-By Action, Quick Change

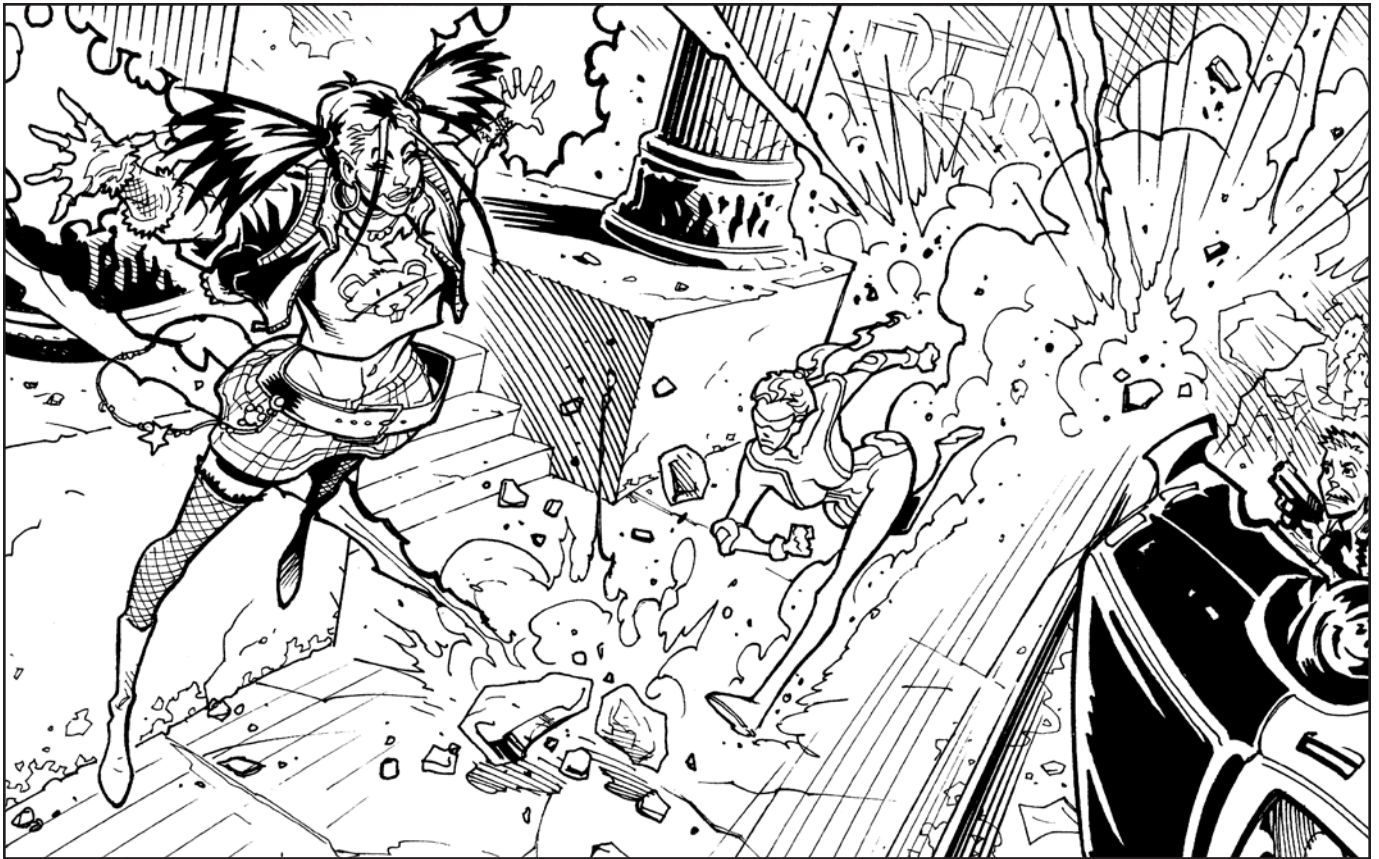
**Powers:** **Super-Speed 8** (2,500 MPH, Power Feats: Water Run, Alternate Powers: **Strike 8**)

**Combat:** Attack +7 (melee), Grapple +8, Damage +8 (Strike), Defense +11 (+3 flatfooted), Knockback –0, Initiative +35

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +12, Fortitude +10, Reflex +6, Will +4

**Abilities 18 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 8 + Powers 41 + Combat 28 + Saves 17 = 121**





be a really quick one. On the other hand, the heroes may have the inspiration, but not the tools. In that case, only one thing can save them: useless trivia.

Any character who can succeed at a Knowledge (popular culture) check against DC 20 remembers the Midnight Hour dance club advertising “AWESOME PYRO!!!!” all this week. The joint is blocks away over in Riverside, but if there’s a flying hero handy (and no other options for a fiery weapon), it’s worth a shot. Given the current traffic backups, if the heroes are all ground-pounders they’ll be pretty much screwed—that is, if they lack flight *and* common sense once Jenni Rocket shows up. Should reason win out, their new super-fast buddy can retrieve the needed gear in two shakes of a lamb’s tail.

The club itself is shut down because of the current citywide emergency, so the pyrotechnic gear is still chained up near the front entrance. Any character able to break a Toughness 8 chain or pick a DC 25 lock (with Disable Device skill) finds themselves in possession of the “AWESOME PYRO!!!!” Just tell the heroes to be careful with it, because it’s a rental.

Assuming the team sent a delivery boy capable of lifting the unit (STR 12 is enough though it’s a Heavy Load), it takes a Craft (mechanical) check against DC 20 to set the pyro machine up and get it ready. After that, they have a one-shot Blast 10 (fire) attack, locked and loaded.

If they miss (Barad is a nimble little minx), Midnight Hour has one more “AWESOME PYRO!!!!” machine available. After that, their options are few. The only remaining option would require that the team’s really into classic rock and can get to the Shuster Auditorium in a timely fashion. All of Foghat’s gear is there, including their dou-

bly awesome pyro (Blast 12). The band is more than willing to let needy heroes take anything they require to save the city.

## AFTER THE STORM

Victorious heroes win quite a bit, and not just the admiration and respect of Foghat. Rampage ended, tax-paying citizens saved and all that, but in addition, they now have proof positive of the G’Tach’s fallibility. That’s bound to be quite a confidence builder, just as much as any encouragement they direct towards Jenni Rocket is for her. If the players take the time to do so—and certainly if they save her life—they make another costumed amigo. This time it’s a young hero who looks up to them, and don’t we all need some of that in our lives? At the very least, Johnny Rocket’s bound to hold the heroes in high regard, having saved the life of his protégé in his absence.

Jobber heroes wake up looking at the lights in the care of some of Freedom City’s Finest. They should have a decent interval in which to get acquainted with Jenni and count their bruises. Should they manage to take Barad prisoner, they find she’s even *more* annoying in close proximity. The Intimidate skill just makes her whiny, and even the best Diplomacy can’t overcome the fact she’s too flaky to remember anything useful (“I came to kill Johnny Wade, but he wasn’t home. Are you Johnny Wade? Where’s Johnny Wade?”). This all probably leads to them palming her off on the nearest super-cops as quickly as possible.

Triumph or defeat, it’s only a matter of time before another upstanding representative of the FCPD tentatively asks the player characters a question. He utters, “*Say, I know you guys just got done with one nutty happening, but would you be interested in a swarm of locusts attacking people over on the Southside?*”

# THE DAY OF THE LOCUST

Airborne heroes have little difficulty spotting the mile-wide cloud of buzzing insects over the Southside. Gamemasters can take pity on player characters who have to hike it (forget their rides—traffic is still virtually frozen in place) and have the cops give them a street address. That way, they at least know where they're going ... very slowly.

Said address is near the intersection of Cyrus and Yeats; it lies in the very heart of the swarm. As the heroes make their way there, they observe how not only are these locusts a year late in appearing, but that the critters are hungrily burrowing into the flesh of area residents. That's good news if you're a stalk of barley, but bad news if you live in Southside.

The heroes may want to help these poor suffering folks out. That's good and *trés* heroic, but it soon becomes obvious their efforts are like draining the Danube with a Dixie cup. Sooner or later, they have to move on and attack the source.

Along the way, the player characters have a chance to pick up a bit of information that might prove useful. If they pass near the Southside Botanica, give them each a Notice skill check against DC 20. Those who stop to help innocent bystanders in the vicinity have a DC 15 because they're closer and because, frankly, we like costumed types who act like real heroes. Success clues them in on the peculiar fact the locusts are avoiding the Botanica like...well, the plague. When and if they choose to follow up on this observation, proceed to **That Voodoo... That You Do... So Well!**



## THAT VOODOO...THAT YOU DO...SO WELL!

The door to the Southside Botanica is closed, but it takes no more violent an act than knocking for it open. Greeting the heroes is a pleasantly rotund lady dressed in what appear to be the raiment of a voodoo priestess. Still, she has a big warm smile that makes her apparent vocation seem entirely non-spooky and almost welcoming. She greets the heroes in Haitian-accented speech with, *"Is it shelter you be looking for, or is there something else Madame Otando can do for you?"*

If the characters come inside, the locusts do not follow. Even if they remain outside, the bugs come no closer. Whenever the heroes get 'round to asking about this remarkable occurrence, Madame Otando replies, *"That be Damballa's doing. He sometimes call himself Moses. You might know him better by that name."*

The Southside Botanica is full of *Vodouisants* singing songs of worship in French. If asked to, Madame Otando refuses to leave in the middle of a ceremony, no matter what. To player characters asking her help (respectfully), she offers them each *"a bit of Vodou magic."* The bits consist of small, fist-size cloth bags tied closed, and smelling not unlike a used diaper full of Indian food.

If the heroes can manage a "thank you" without grimacing, Madame Otando sends them on their way in a friendly fashion, inviting them to come back if they ever need any more *Vodou* magic. She is no less friendly if they do wince, but adds, *"That smell? Oh, you get used to it!"*

## BUG ZAPPER

For as long as a player character (or anyone else, for that matter) has one of Madame Otando's mojo bags in his possession, the plague locusts stay well away. In fact, the bad bugs actively steer of anyone holding one of the bags.

No doubt this makes at least some of the heroes curious. If they untie the bags and look inside, undeterred by the likes of Pandora and cats, they find out two things. First, they are full of natural (though extremely smelly) herbs. Second, they discover the bags no longer function once opened.

If the heroes run back to Madame Otando, they find themselves out of luck. *"Bags take much time to prepare. Got no more. Can't make no more for many, many days,"* she regretfully informs them.

In game terms, anyone with an unopened bag somewhere on his person is immune to Arbeh's Environmental Control and Disintegration powers. He can still rip their heads off with his mandibles and such, but hey, that's a worry for later on.

## BUG'S EYE VIEW

The location near Cyrus and Yeats turns out to be a two-story building that looks like a 1950s-style house, surrounded by a moderately sized lawn. Outside, a sign on the premises indicates it's the "Southside Retirement Castle." It's an old folks home, and clearly not a four-star one. It's also the center of the swarm's activities. Atop the dilapidated building is a man-sized locust, reared up on its hindmost legs and ranting above the sound of the buzzing swarm it seems to command. If the players pause to listen, the rant seems off-kilter somehow, and not just because it's coming from a six-foot-long locust.



Player characters succeeding in an opposed test pitting their Sense Motive skill against Arbeh's (unskilled) Bluff are able to put their finger on why it's so odd. It's a villain speech, but to experienced heroes, it sounds more like what some non-costumed person *thinks* a villain speech sounds like. His words sound quoted, devoid of conviction and a full grasp of their meaning. For example, he says "PLE-thora" instead of "PLETH-ora," and "de-BACK-le" instead of "de-BOCK-le."

In between asking themselves what kind of villain uses "pleth-ora" and "debackle" to scare anybody, heroes listening to the rant glean the reason for the attack. The chief bug declares, "*Hear me, Brian Nisbet! I am Arbeh, minion of your archenemy the Scarlet Spectre, and this is the day upon which you shall die, Brian Nisbet!*" With that, his mandibles tear a whole through the tiled roof and he disappears into the attic.

## BUGGY PROGRAM

The heroes don't have any idea who Brian Nisbet is, but they are going to ask. It takes a successful Knowledge (popular culture) check against DC 30, plus an admission by the character that they spend *a lot* of time on the Internet to have any idea what his significance might be. However, Gamemaster, if you want to preserve the character's surprise value, just say all checks fail regardless of result.

With Super Trivia out of the way, the player characters can get on with the business of saving the mysterious Mr. Nisbet and anyone else who happens to be inside the run-down Southside Retirement Castle. Once inside, they face the following.

First of all is Arbeh himself. Whether or not the heroes have any of Madame Otando's magic bags, he maintains the swarm of locusts (Environmental Control) and sics them on vulnerable targets (Disintegration) that are out of melee range. Whenever practicable, he uses his deadly mandibles (Strike) to rip his opponents' heads off, arms off, torsos off—he's not picky that way.

Secondly, there are plenty of elderly people who are shook up about the marauding locusts, especially the big one wandering the halls making threats. Under these circumstances, they can't tell hero from villain at a glance. An errant cane or walker might hit a hero (–2 to checks attempted that round) at an inopportune time. Even after it's clear who's good and who's bad, there are still people in need of all kinds of assistance, from medical to simply exiting. In short, whenever the Gamemaster needs the heroes put off their game temporarily, the elderly bystanders suddenly need help.

## THE HATE BUG

Arbeh is having the time of his life being the bully instead of the bullied. Better still for him, he's become everything he ever admired or was fascinated by in insects. As far as Diplomacy skill goes, he's Hostile and won't even think of coming down from his power trip until he's all the way up to Friendly.

## ARBEH (LOCUSTS)

POWER LEVEL 12

Str 12	Dex 20	Con 22	Int 16	Wis 12	Cha 4
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**Skills:** Computers 6 (+9), Knowledge (life sciences) 7 (+10), Notice 7 (+8)

**Feats:** Ambidexterity, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Additional Limbs 2** (insect limbs), **Disintegration 3**

(omnivorous locust swarms, *Extras:* Burst Area, Linked with Environmental Control, *Flaws:* Limited to bio-matter, *Power Feats:* Progression 7–3000 ft. radius), **Environmental Control 12** (locust swarms, DC 10 distraction), **Flight 3**, **Immunity 9** (life support), **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Strike 12** (mandibles)

**Combat:** Attack +11, Grapple +12, Damage +12 (Strike), Defense +12, Knockback –9, Initiative +13

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (toxins and poisons, moderate, +50% DC, –2 points)

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +12, Fortitude +10, Reflex +8, Will +8

**Abilities 26 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 84 + Combat 46 + Saves 19 – Drawbacks 2 = 182**

Getting the young man inside the carapace to that point means making him realize the full consequences of his actions. This can include pointing out he's not hurting anyone who ever hurt him, or the difficulty giant locusts have getting into Ivy League schools (not to mention finding prom dates).

Unlike the other G'Tach members, characters can use Intimidate skill against Arbeh without penalty, during or after combat. He doesn't have much to add to whatever information the heroes may have already gotten out of previously captured plague avatars, but the heroes probably feel better having checked this possibility out.

Arbeh is no one's fanatic, so he tries to run away if seriously hurt. He doesn't have much of an escape plan but if the player characters let him go, he keeps on going.

## BEGINNING OF THE END

The suddenly much-sought-after Mr. Nisbet makes an appearance if the battle begins to tilt against the good guys. If the heroes are getting a six-legged butt kicking, this event gives them the break they need to turn the tide.

At that point, a hallway door behind Arbeh slowly and quietly opens. A silhouetted figure appears in the doorway. While the oblivious plague avatar is turned away, it begins emitting a low hum and a golden beam of energy. It speaks, its voice male but definitely higher pitched, "Looking for *me*, were you, eh? Not much to say now, it seems." The door then closes with a flourish.

This attack injures Arbeh to whatever degree the Gamemaster deems necessary to even the odds, stunning him at least. It does not kill him though, under any circumstances.

# WELL I'M A KING BEE, BABY

Once order's restored at the Retirement Castle and all the injuries tended to, the player characters are going to want to find Brian Nisbet, especially if a certain ray-blasting benefactor made an appearance during the battle. No matter how long it takes, whether they go straight to his room or hunt door to door, the man they seek is eventually found.

Depending on the players, they may kick in Nisbet's door or gently rap. Either way, an elderly but unbowed man greets them with a broad smile, decked out in a three-piece suit covered in black and yellow stripes from top to bottom. He's donning a matching domino mask as the heroes enter.

If the heroes come in warily (perhaps because they know he's armed or their players are just used to killing stuff for XP), he



says, "Come on in! No need to be nervous—I got out of the business back in '68." He carries no apparent weapons on his person, but on the other side of the room from him is a smoking ray gun that would be right at home in Buck Rogers' hand. "Don't tell the nurses about that, okay?" he whispers, "They don't know I kept a few souvenirs from the old days."

Upon entering, the heroes find themselves in a furnished room, with a computer terminal and boxes full of yellow and black striped merchandise. A quick glance reveals books, t-shirts, can holders, mouse pads, hats, and photos of Nisbet in his current apparel. "That's right," Nisbet says, "you've entered the hive of the infamous *Bee-Keeper*!"

## BUZZ CLIPS

Nisbet makes the heroes comfortable as best he can, trying to get them all seated (using boxes of merch), offering them some tea (with honey, of course), and so forth. The entire time, he can barely conceal his glee at the characters' presence, nor his conviction they doubtlessly know who he is.

When the heroes give in and ask, Nisbet gladly relates how he was once an "infamous supervillain" but is now long retired. "Yes indeed, I was quite the caper artist back in the day. With my brilliant criminal mind, my special trained bees, and my stinger gun, the *Bee-Keeper* was feared throughout the city!"

Players can (re)try their Knowledge (popular culture) check against DC 30; DC 25 if they viewed the new exhibit at the Super Museum back in **Chapter 2**. If successful, they have in fact heard of a supervillain active from the late 1940s to late '60s called the *Bee-Keeper*, but the words "infamous" and "feared" are not attached

to the name. Nonetheless, a successful Sense Motive skill check (DC 20) confirms Nisbet is telling the truth, at least as he sees it.

If the player characters challenge his claims (however gently), he stays genial but incredulously responds, "I was one of the founding members of *Troublemakers, Incorporated!* You know—there was me, the *Amazing Rando*, *Calendar Girl*, the *Smoker*, *Teenage Caveman*, and *Doctor Zorka*. We were in all the papers. On the radio, too!" He pauses, surprised for a second, before continuing, "Surely you've seen my website?"

## BUZZKILL

By this time, even the densest players should catch on to the fact that even if the *Bee-Keeper* wasn't an important supervillain, it's important to Brian Nisbet to believe he was. Give them a Sense Motive skill check (DC 20) if they need it, but Mr. Nisbet grows sullen, withdrawn, and uncommunicative until the heroes at least pretend to go along with him.

As long as he believes he's got his audience enraptured, Mr. Nisbet happily talks to the young heroes who've *obviously* come to pay their respects to one of the "elder statesmen" of the supervillain community. He's delighted to talk with them about anything they wish, and probably for a lot longer than they wish.

"Yessiree, I got out of the life back in '68. I had just got out of the joint and was pulling a new caper. Then the Bowman came after me. He was *drunk!* Could've killed me! When the heroes got like that," he says before pausing to show his regret, "it just wasn't the same anymore...." The sadness in his voice as it trails off is unmistakable.

"So these days, I put on the old costume, do the supervillain autograph shows, and sell stuff over the Internet," he says with his jocular tone restored. "It gives me a little extra income—allows me to live *here*," he says, a bit ruefully, "but mostly I do it for the fans. The kids these days, they really love to meet and talk to us old-timers, you know!"

## THE STING

The heroes are no doubt anxious to test the *Bee-Keeper*'s sharp memory, but when they ask him about his "archenemy," he replies, "You mean *Centurion*? Or, hmm... *Hepcat*, maybe?" It takes several minutes (and all the memory joggers the characters can muster) before he confusedly says, "The *Scarlet Spectre*? We really only fought once, and that was a total accident."

"It was back in 1953, and *Troublemakers, Inc.* had just pulled off its greatest heist ever. We robbed every last Studebaker dealership in the city. We cleared \$6,000 apiece on that job, easy. Anyway," he continues, "we split up to evade the cops more easily. I headed for the *Fens*." Mr. Nisbet takes a sip of his tea and continues, "I ducked into the John Tyler Elementary School building to avoid some coppers. That's when I saw her."

Mr. Nisbet's high voice grows shriller when he says, "She pulled a gun on me! A @\$%\$ gun! With *bullets!* What kind of hero carries a piece and *shoots* people?" He pauses to collect himself, and then concludes thoughtfully, "I think I startled her. I was the supervillain making a getaway, but it was like I was in *her* hide-out. I must've surprised her, the way she was screaming at me. Anyway, I got the heck out of there when she started shooting. Never saw her again after that."

Once his story is told, Mr. Nisbet responds to any other queries the heroes have. However, like everyone else who seems to have ever had contact with Virginia North or the *Scarlet Spectre*, she just didn't make much of an impression on him.



Any suspicions the player characters have about Mr. Nisbet living a lonely existence are confirmed when they try to leave. He makes quite an effort to get them to stay and visit just a little longer. The former Bee-Keeper even offers to accompany the heroes and provide "a veteran supervillain's perspective," despite his 87-year-old form.

If a hero makes a sincere promise to visit him again soon, ask him for his autograph (for which he generously waives his usual fee), or performs some similar act of kindness, the aged supervillain is overjoyed beyond words. The player characters may not be able to save everyone in *Time of Vengeance*, but here they can save a penitent old gentleman from loneliness, the greatest villain of all.

## THE LITTLE OLD LADY

For the true heroes who were kind to Mr. Nisbet, there's a special bonus. As they leave the former Bee-Keeper's "hive," a little old lady stops them. She's apparently been waiting outside the door, obviously excited to tell the heroes something.

"My name is Mrs. Kemp. I'm sorry to have eavesdropped, but I couldn't help overhearing you young people asking about the *Scarlet Spectre*," she says before pausing for the heroes' confirmation. Once they affirm, she continues, "*She was my heroine when I was a little girl. She saved my mother and me from a robber back in 1948, and I never forgot it,*" she says emphatically.

"Many people here used to live in the Fens, and turns out a lot of us admired her," she says wistfully, "*She was the only mystery man hero the Fens had back in those days.*" Mrs. Kemp's face turns more regretful when she says, "*She got in some trouble later on and*

*everyone else hated her. But I never forgot what she did to help my mother and me.*"

"In fact," Mrs. Kemp says, "*a bunch of us chipped in and bought her a monument a few years back. It's a little thing, but no one deserves to be forgotten. Do they, young man?*" The heroes, most of whom will grow old someday too, are likely given pause by the implications her question has for them.

If the heroes missed it back in **Chapter 1**, Mrs. Kemp can tell them where in the Fens the monument is located. She doesn't know what ever happened to the Scarlet Spectre, nor does she recall Virginia North without prompting ("*Oh yes, that was her real name, wasn't it?*"). If the heroes tell her Virginia was once a resident at the Retirement Castle, she's genuinely surprised, and says, "*She was right here, and we never realized it. Never got the chance to say thanks to her...*"

## ONE

If the characters continue to ask around the Retirement Castle enough, eventually they find a nurse who recalls Virginia North. She remembers her as "a very sad person. Kept to herself all the time. Didn't speak to anybody. Poor woman had no friends or family. Came here from the Fens, I believe. They took her away to the hospital about ten years ago when they discovered her cancer."

Anyone who does the math realizes Virginia left the Retirement Castle just before the residents got the inspiration to build a Scarlet Spectre monument. Bad luck wasn't done with her, it seems, even after forty years.

# AIN'T NO SUNSHINE

**A**fter the heroes conclude their business at the Southside Retirement Castle, news of the latest strangeness arrives. They can hear it on the lone TV set at the Retirement Castle, or the super-cops can share the 411 when they come to slap the three pairs of cuffs on Arbeh. Around the Pramas Bridge, heading into Bayview, it's gone pitch black dark a full hour before nature dictates it should. Heroes who've already put the whole Old Testament thing together probably surmise that Plague #9 just got into town.

If the player characters are able to take their media with them as they go, they can hear WFAN's very own "Sky Eye One" Roger Omak do play-by-play as the mile-wide eclipse makes its way across the Pramas Bridge into Bayview. This prompts some terrified folks to jump for it rather than remain in the way of certain harm. Stopping to save them slows the heroes up (if they don't stop, hit the players with a clown hammer hard), but the live reports of the rescues give Freedom City a much-needed lift.

By the time the player characters catch up to it, the blackened zone has progressed to the Claremont Academy, which seems to be its intended target. Rather, we should say *his* intended target, because as the mystical darkness gives way to natural twilight, the face of the enemy becomes visible amongst the long shadows.

## THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Floating spookily in midair over the center of campus, the darkness avatar grimly announces, "*Eight plagues hath been visited upon this city for its multitude of sins. I am the ninth, Choshech, and I come to herald the death of the children of the wicked. May God have mercy on your souls.*" With that, he slowly raises his out-

stretched arms from his side up to waist level, and his Animated Shadows begin their attack on the Claremont Academy.

Needless to say, the Academy's students are even more fired up by Choshech's threats than they were for the homecoming game against Sacred Heart of Mary, but ultimately to no avail. Even with the player characters helping, the superheroes in training are outnumbered and overmatched. Still, their sacrifice helps take down all 25 of his Animated Shadows, winnowing the field to just the player characters vs. Choshech and the rest of his array of powers.

This scene doesn't have to be more than a cameo appearance for the Next-Gen. One of the intended happy outcomes of this adventure is for newcomer heroes to develop good relations with the rest of Freedom City's superhero community. Fighting to save the Claremont Academy certainly accomplishes that, but the Gamemaster may want to add a bit more detail and color to the battle as it progresses.

In that interest, the Gamemaster may wish to review pages 129-137 in the *Freedom City* Second Edition sourcebook before running this section in order to get a full picture of the Academy, its students, and its faculty. While it isn't necessary to dice out the Next-Gen's (ultimately stalemated) battle with the Animated Shadows, describing brief glimpses of the action lets the players know Bolt, Megastar, Nereid, Seven, Sonic and the other "gifted" students went down fighting and took all but one of the baddies down with them.

## FLICK OF THE SWITCH

Sooooo, big scary guy with darkness powers, eh? He's gotta be vulnerable to light, or so your players are likely to conclude. Ah,



but what if their combined candlepower consists of the "Booty Hunter" lighter they picked up in the Fens back in **Chapter 1**? That's when the national pastime comes to the rescue.

It's dark, but anyone who gets a line of sight on the Academy's baseball field can try a Notice check (DC 15) to spot the large array of lights around the field. After that, they just need to make the light bulb over their heads go off.

Luring Choshech out to the pitcher's mound can be done in a number of ways: Knockback plus concerted attacks, Bluff, Taunt—

## GIANT ANIMATED SHADOW

POWER LEVEL 10

**Str 42** | **Dex 10** | **Con 30** | **Int 6** | **Wis 12** | **Cha 10**

**Skills:** Intimidate 4 (+12), Notice 4 (+5)

**Powers:** **Blast 12**, **Flight 3**, **Growth 16** (*Flaws:* Permanent, *Power Feats:* Innate), **Insubstantial 3** (vulnerable to light-based attacks), **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious)

**Combat:** Attack +6 (includes -8 due to size), Grapple +22, Damage +16 (unarmed), +12 (blast), Defense +4 (includes -8 due to size), Knockback -32, Initiative +0

**Drawbacks:** Weakness (bright light, minor, -2 points)

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +16, Fortitude +12, Reflex +2, Will +3

**Abilities 2 + Skills 2 (8 ranks) + Powers 90 + Combat 52 + Saves 6**  
- Drawbacks 2 = 150

you name it. Once the player characters have him rounding third, they just need to be ready to light the lights.

If they don't think to ask someone knowledgeable (like a student or faculty member), it takes a Search skill check against DC 15 to find the switches. Once there, the heroes find a Toughness 8 chain and a padlock (pick-able with a DC 25 check using Disable Device skill) between them and the lighting up the night. Once those have been dealt with, an Intelligence check (DC 15) is needed to figure out how to get the juice on and successfully move those couple of big, impressive switches from "on" to "off."

Once it's "Spotlight Dance with Big Creepy Guy," the heroes are likely a mite disappointed that he doesn't melt like the Wicked Witch of the West. They (and Choshech himself) soon learn the real advantage the heroes now have: all the plague avatar's offensive powers are completely nullified while under the lights. Naturally, Choshech tries to fly away as quickly as possible, so the players had best take full advantage of his powerlessness while they can (with a Combined Attack, for instance).

## AND IN THE DARKNESS BIND THEM

Choshech does not see himself as a murderer, but rather as a weapon in the hands of a righteous and just God. Mr. Infamy convinced him that same God wants people dead (starting at the Claremont Academy), but all on his own, he decided not to be excessively cruel about it. Therefore, he begins the battle with his non-lethal powers like Fatigue (so they can die in their sleep) as well as Snare and Dazzle (to deter further resistance). The final, lethal deed is to be done via Drain Constitution, but he uses this power with restraint as he does not want anyone to die while still awake.

The heroes are not without a little wrath themselves. If they start to hurt Choshech seriously, he relies on his Teleport power to give himself time and space enough to recover. Retreat, surrender, and being talked out of his mission are out of the question for him. He easily rates as a Fanatic on the Interaction Table. His total, dispassionate commitment to carrying out his task is ready evidence of this.

If the player characters win, it's all smiles and sunshine. They get a round of applause from the Claremont student body for saving them and a firm handshake of congratulations from a stern (but approving) Duncan Summers. The player characters (if not already acquainted) have made some more new super-buddies, and now they're bonafide teen idols to boot. Eat your heart out, David Cassidy.

Their only disappointment comes if they try to interrogate Choshech. As far as the Interaction table is concerned, he's eas-



ily a Fanatic, so use of Diplomacy skill is near pointless. Since he believes he's going to Hell for his failure, there's likely not much the heroes can muster to Intimidate him, either. Talking to Choshech gets them nothing more than an endless string of fanatical rants and the creepy feeling that always accompanies time spent with a total zealot.

## THE ETERNAL NIGHT

Losing to Choshech has equally terrible consequences, with the exact level of gruesomeness left up to the Gamemaster. According to plan, Choshech is to kill the Claremont Academy student body, then kill more people in Freedom City until dawn. In this exceedingly grim possibility, Duncan Summers is able to pull a few of his pupils to safety (i.e., anyone the GM wants to keep around for future game sessions), but many others are not so blessed. Freedom City endures a full-blown massacre before sun-up, and all because of the player characters losing one battle.

That's pretty dark (no pun intended), even for a pretend game. Maybe that's your preferred style of play, Gamemaster, and really, who are we to criticize? If dark and depressing is what draws people around your kitchen table, go ahead and let the slaughter commence. However, if killing hundreds of comic-book people is way too mid-'90s comics for your game, here's an out.

After Choshech waxes the heroes, the plague avatar begins to claim the lives of the fallen teens. The enigmatic mystical guardian Lantern Jack appears out of thin air, however, and stays his hand. A fantastic arcane battle takes place, during which Duncan Summers is able to get his pupils and the player characters to safety. They characters regain consciousness to see Lantern Jack standing over the fallen form of Choshech. Just as their addled brains begin to form the word "thanks," he casts his awful glowing gaze directly at them and says, "Everybody gets *one*," and ghostly fades away.

Jack had to take Choshech down hard and fast, so the plague avatar's in no condition to talk to the player characters until long after *Time of Vengeance* is back on your games shelf. In fact, it'll be several weeks before Choshech can chew.

Lantern Jack makes it quite clear that, from now on, the heroes are on their own. If the GM had to bring in the arcane cavalry to save them, the heroes get nothing but their lives (and those of many hundred others) as reward.

## REMEDIAL JUDAICA

After events conclude at the Claremont Academy, the player characters get a night of peace in which to catch their breath and dust off their super-suits. The chapter's done, unless the players have no grasp of motif. In this case, they need to spend a little more time getting schooled before departing.

If the players have somehow managed to completely and utterly miss the connection between the attacks on Freedom City and the book of Exodus to this point, it's time to give them a freebie. As the heroes recover from their schoolyard fight, Rabbi Ben Berger (one of the Academy's theology teachers) passes by and casually remarks, "It's just like the *G'Tach*."

He readily explains the reference to any heroes who haven't yet been able to put together "ten" and "plagues." If asked (or if need be), he grants the player characters access to his office and library, which should be enough to school them on the relevant portions of **The Ten Plagues of Egypt** sidebar and anything else they want to know about the scriptural basis for Freedom's current ordeals.

## CHOSHECH (DARKNESS)

POWER LEVEL 12

Str 14	Dex 16	Con 22	Int 12	Wis 14	Cha 12
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**Skills:** Intimidate 3 (+4), Knowledge (current events) 5 (+6), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 5 (+6), Notice 3 (+4)

**Feats:** Fearsome Presence 3, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Darkness Control 12** (*Alternate Powers* [all Dynamic]: **Animate**

**Objects 10** [shadows, *Power Feats:* Progression 4 (25 constructs)], **Blast**

**10** [*Extras:* Burst Area, *Flaws:* Touch Range, *Power Feats:* Progression

4–1000 ft. radius], **Create Object 12** [shadow constructs], **Dazzle 10**

[visual, *Extras:* Burst Area, *Flaws:* Touch Range, *Power Feats:* Progression

4–1000 ft. radius], **Drain Constitution 12** [life-energy drain, *Extras:* Total

Fade], **ESP 12** [visual and auditory, *Flaws:* Medium—darkness or shadows,

*Power Feats:* Dimensional 3, Progression 7 (30,000' range), Subtle 2],

**Fatigue 10** [energy drain, *Extras:* Burst Area, Sleep, *Flaws:* Touch Range,

*Power Feats:* Progression 4–1000' radius], **Snare 10** [*Extras:* Burst Area,

*Flaws:* Touch Range, *Power Feats:* Progression 4–1000' radius], **Teleport**

**12** [*Extras:* Accurate, *Flaws:* Medium—darkness or shadows], **Flight**

**4, Immunity 13** (life support, darkness and light power descriptors),

**Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Super-Senses 2** (darkvision)

**Combat:** Attack +12, Grapple +14, Damage +10 (Blast), +2 (unarmed), Defense +12, Knockback –9, Initiative +11

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (magical attacks, moderate, +50% DC, –2 points)

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +12, Fortitude +10, Reflex +8, Will +10

**Abilities 28 + Skills 4 (16 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 77 + Combat 48 + Saves 17 – Drawbacks 2 = 180**

## AWARDING HERO POINTS

That's **Chapter 3** gone. Time to check the oil, wipe the windows, dollar gas, and fill 'er up on hero points. Here are some possibilities for awards in **Chapter 3**:

- **Setbacks:** Losing to Barad or Arbeh might be hero-point-worthy if it came down to one character having a Bill Buckner moment. Cold-blooded Gamemasters who let Choshech severely reduce the number of chairs needed for the Claremont Academy's next commencement just flat-out owe their bummed-out players some hero points.
- **Heroism:** Even more so than **Chapter 2, Chapter 3** is about the measure of a hero in terms of something other than just punching out the bad guys. It's important for the Gamemaster to show the "game-y" merits of being kind to Mr. Nisbet, giving Jenni Rocket some encouragement, or mailing the Midnight Hour a check if anything happened to its rented pyro machines. Reward the players who pay it forward in their preferred currency: hero points.
- **Roleplaying:** Some scenes in his chapter are there mostly for their role-playing value, like their meeting with the former Bee-Keeper. Players who take that chance and run with it make the game more fun for everyone. Return the favor and make the game even *more* fun with hero points.
- **Stunts:** If the players can top taking out an avatar of Old Testament wrath with a pyro machine borrowed from Foghat, give 'em a hero point. Heck, give it to them if they can equal it, or come up with some other ingenious way of dispatching the **Chapter 3** baddies.

# CHAPTER FOUR: AND ALL THE FIRSTBORN IN THE LAND...

**T**he ultimate chapter of *Time of Vengeance* is the conclusion of a long, hard road for the player characters. At the end is a battle with a frighteningly powerful magical entity, and the line in Vegas has the heroes as two-touchdown underdogs.

How the player characters reach their destination is a little less clear. Depending on how much detective work they've done

to this point (not to mention how well they did it), they might have a good lead on where Virginia is, or they can be ignorantly waiting for the G'Tach to make its next move. Whether your players are active or reactive, Gamemaster, we've got your narrative covered. Before events get that far, though, an unexpected guest drops in to pay them a visit.

## HOMeward BOUND

**W**henver the heroes wrap up their business at the Claremont Academy, the winds of plot blow them back to their home base(s). They might go there of their own volition, horse-whipped, dog-tired and in need of a hot meal and a soft bed. Doing so plays right into your hands, Gamemaster, and events can proceed apace.

"Super-hero all night and party everyday" types might need some encouragement. If the hero team has a super-base set up, a signal draws their attention back to their Fortress of Us. It can be an intruder alarm being tripped or a call from their stiff upper-lipped butler to inform them *"a Mr. Infamy has paid a call, sir, and insists on a parley."*

If the heroes all keep their own pads, the message can come from one of their roommates or family members. Nothing beats a cell phone call from a player character's surprised and nervous wife saying, *"Honey, there's some 'Mr. Infamy' guy who just showed up in the kitchen. He wants to talk to you!"* to get the heroes where they need to be.

Failing all else, Mr. Infamy can ring the player characters himself. In this case, he makes an extra effort to make the call as creepy as possible: *"This is Mr. Infamy, calling from your living room. Lovely photo of your parents on the mantle, by the way, do they live in town? Anyway, I'll be here waiting for you when you get home. We have some business to discuss."*

## NOWHERE TO RUN

When the characters make it back home, they find no sign of violence or forced entry. Mr. Infamy is seated in the dwelling's most comfortable chair, doing something that's innocuous on the surface, but very disconcerting in context. This might be his looking at a framed picture of a character's loved ones, cradling a daughter's favorite teddy bear, or casually thumbing through a book or file full of information a hero would rather keep confidential.

He has activated whatever media player is handiest (switching on a TV, tuning in a radio, etc.), and is taking in the day's grave newscasts with an air of mock concern. *"My, my, looks like quite a spot of trouble, wouldn't you say?"* he quips.

No matter what the heroes do, Mr. Infamy retains this unfailing politeness and outer civility throughout the encounter. If the

player characters attack him, he simply reappears directly behind them before their blows strike home. Chicken-hearted heroes who turn tail and run find Mr. Infamy waiting for them around every corner. *"Aren't you bored of this yet? I simply want to chat, and this does not end until you listen,"* he informs them. When the players finally give in, the talks begin.

## DINNER WITH INFAMY

In the likelihood they've not met before, Mr. Infamy introduces himself, and gentlemanly presents the heroes with one of his cards. *"I am in the business of making deals,"* he states, *"deals which grant people their hearts' desires. Yours, I gather, is saving this glorious metropolis. That can most certainly be arranged."*

Mr. Infamy's offer is to boost the player character's abilities far in excess of the members of the G'Tach. To get them to take it, he uses whatever emotional appeals the heroes might be vulnerable to (*"Imagine all the 'good' you could accomplish with that sort of power!"* or *"It would guarantee your husband and children survive this crisis unharmed, as well as the children of so many others."*)

He also resorts to logic, pointing out any G'Tach members still at large (*"They are coming back, you know,"* he says), and by far their most terrible member is yet to come. With the media punctuating his words, he declares, *"Even if you defeat the G'Tach by some miracle, the panic engendered by the long struggle will immolate this fair city, right down to the ground."*

Mr. Infamy answers any side questions the heroes throw at him, unless they concern either the personal mysteries he wishes to maintain or the fine print of the proposed deal. These sorts of inquiries make him smile, and bring out his charming, evasive side. On almost any other topic (like Virginia North), he's seemingly so confident in the G'Tach's triumph that he replies readily and seemingly truthfully (*"Yes, I offered Miss North a deal and some advice. You are doomed without the same sort of assistance"*). However, he is always quick to change the topic back to the offer he's put on the table.

## SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

Sensible, forthright players take this opportunity not only to turn Mr. Infamy down flat, but give him a classic Silver Age superhero





speech to boot. Even if the Gamemaster doesn't actually have music swelling in the background, everyone at the table will hear it anyway. Mr. Infamy reacts by smiling politely, saying *"Very well. When you change your mind, you have my card,"* then disappearing in a sulfurous cloud.

However, as you've probably noticed, roleplayers are a strange, wacky, and often contrary lot, so much so that at least one of them may say yes to Mr. Infamy's dubious bargain. There's one born every minute, as they say. Here's how to handle any all-day suckers in your game.

First, Mr. Infamy informs them, *"This might smart a bit,"* and the gullible hero is enveloped in an obsidian-hued energy field. They convulse and slip into oblivion as if they've suffered a large electrical shock. As Mr. Infamy vanishes, privately inform the players of the now-damned characters that they are all now PL 18 and have enough extra power points to get them to a total of 270. Send them off to allocate their hellish gains while their characters remain unconscious. The rest of the players can role-play their response to their friends' crappy decision-making skills.

Once the new PL 18, diabolically tinged characters are ready to go, they wake up, feeling better than ever. They continue to feel that way until right after the G'Tach is finally defeated. After that, changes are on the way.

## I THINK I'M GOING SLIGHTLY MAD

Presumably, a putative hero makes a deal with Mr. Infamy out of desperation: either desperate love or desperate fear. Whichever it is, the smells-of-brimstone character quickly becomes completely obsessed with the well-being of the thing that drove them to accept the deal. They begin to use their awesome powers exclusively to look after the source of their motivation and to eliminate anyone that might harm it. Before long, their paranoia leads them to maim or kill for little or no reason because of threats that exist only in their fevered imaginations.

If their motivation is for something physical, like a loved one or the city itself, the in-bed-with-the-cloven-one hero dedicates every second to watching over their paramour or home. It isn't long before she starts melting the faces of anyone who stares at it too long. Internal things, on the other hand, are overcompensated for. The sucker character goes to extreme lengths to prove his worth and snaps the bones of anyone who might doubt he's got no character flaws.

These actions can be role-played by the player (if he's willing and able, in the GM's estimation) or by the Gamemaster. In either case, his former friends and teammates are soon forced to intervene and must then either dispatch their ex-comrade or talk him into giving up the dark side of his personality. Just call it *Time of Vengeance II: Electric Boogaloo*.

## BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

Once the Last Temptation of the Heroes is settled, the stage for the final confrontation is set. If the heroes are barking up all the wrong trees or are just plain stumped, the fight comes to them and events progress to **Death of the Firstborn**. Heroes who decide to take the fight to the opposition for a change need to start the search somewhere. Alert characters should at this point suspect one locale over all others.

Players (especially those who were paying attention while at the Retirement Castle) have likely noted the Fens' recurrence in Virginia's background. To them, at least, all arrows point to her old neighborhood being the best place to begin the hunt. If the players decide to wander off script instead of searching the Fens, simply roleplay the futility of their search until they do go there or things get stale, necessitating a move on to **Death of the Firstborn**.

When (and if) the heroes arrive there, the Fens remains almost completely abandoned, home only to a few stray animals and lightweight trash blowing in the wind. This makes searches of the area that much easier, but on the downside, it's also still carpeted in dead, rotting frogs. The stench has the same effect as a constant Environmental Control (DC 10 distraction) throughout the neighborhood, or at least it does on anyone with a nose.

Virginia's old tenement building is vacant except for the repellant Harry Smilac, so going there nets them nothing but a second crack at noticing the Scarlet Spectre monument (if they botched both previous chances to find out about it). Again, it takes a Notice skill check against DC 15 to discern it amongst the detritus.

## MY OLD SCHOOL

The other structure relevant to Virginia is the Tyler Elementary School, and it says quite a bit about the Fens that it has been left standing after all these years. A successful Knowledge (street-

wise) check against DC 20 indicates a character knows where it is, as well as its current usage as a meeting spot for crack cocaine dealers, crackheads—pretty much anyone involved in the exciting, fast-paced world of crack. Heroes with more "geek" than "street" in them can simply consult a good city map, on- or offline, instead.

As indicated earlier, Tyler Elementary still stands, but when the player characters finally see it, they are hard pressed to explain how and why. The building is in such rough shape that it could be the spray-painted street gang symbols are the only things holding it up. Other than the structure being brick and block-shaped, there are no hints it was ever a place for children and learning.

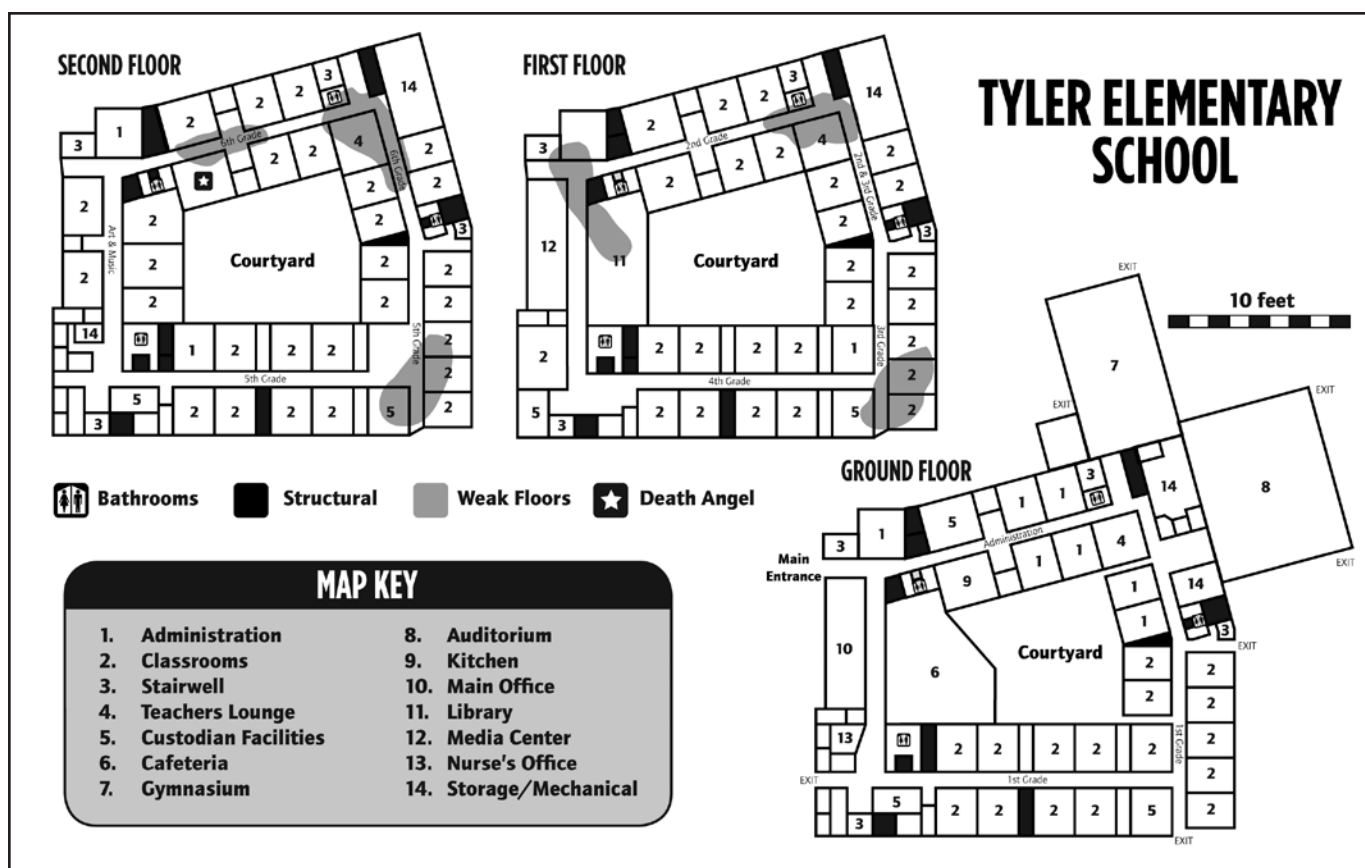
There are no outer indications of activity. Between the darkness within, Virginia's powers, and layers upon layers of lead paint (Hey, what was better for kids than that?), there is likely no substitute for exploring the interior first hand. Doing so is tricky up on the second and third story, as the floor there is so perilous that even the crackheads avoid it.

Certain spots (marked on the map) are ready to give way just from the weight of a person's body. Stepping on them causes a hole and forces the character to make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid having the law of gravity strictly enforced. A fall takes them all the way down to floor below, and inflicts DC 11 in damage. If they land on another weakened spot, another drop may be in order. It also pretty much erases any chance they have for surprising anyone else who might be inside.

## HURT

Virginia, now transformed into the Death Angel, sits placidly alone on the second floor in what once used to be a classroom. She is oblivious to anything but her inner pain, and sits staring at a long-dead clock as if it were still tolling the seconds until something





happens...something terrible. The Death Angel remains so until the costumed heroes enter the room, even if they previously announced their presence (via a fall through the floor, for instance).

Barring any sudden downward trips to the floor below, the heroes can attempt to sneak up on the Death Angel as usual: an opposed skill check pitting her Notice +9 against the characters' Stealth skills. If they get the drop on her, they can proceed as they will (including a sneak attack). Failure means they can't surprise her in combat, but that's about it. The Death Angel is too content to be still and bathe in her hate and anguish to do otherwise.

When the player characters finally step through the doorway (or Pearl Harbor her), they catch a glimpse of the sadness etched on her face for just a moment, and then see it transform into a visage of almost unspeakable torment and anger. Whether they came in peace or to ambush, the accursed costumed heroes just shot to the top of the Death Angel's list.

The characters soon find themselves up against the most savage, ruthless opponent they've yet faced. What was once Virginia North is now a merciless killing machine. Mr. Infamy's beloved motif is history, and she's ready to slay far more than just the firstborn male children. She does not banter, hesitate, or flinch at attacks or threats. Her every action is lethal, and her every word speaks of neglect, hatred, and jealousy. The one-time hero has become death, and giving death is her all.

## MY EMPIRE OF DIRT

Once the angry PL 16 supervillainess begins her relentless attempts to murder them, the player characters are likely to feel bereft of advantages. However, their detective work paid off in

one way, and that is they could not have picked a better place to have an ultimate battle.

The Fens, as previously noted, is deserted (and lest we forget, still really stinky). Its buildings...well, let's just say that if it's possible to knock a structure down and not feel the slightest bit bad about it, the time and place are now and in the Fens. So for once, the superheroes can let loose with their powers almost indiscriminately, with no fear of wounding innocent bystanders or destroying valuable property. They may lose to the Death Angel, but it almost certainly won't be because they had to restrain themselves.

## TRY TO KILL IT ALL AWAY

It may well be that your rendition of *Time of Vengeance* ends with an orgy of die-throwing and a dazzling display of superhuman powers. If so, the rest of the scenario comes down to who's left standing at the end.

The Death Angel's preferred attack is her area-effect Blast because she's got a lot of people to kill and there are only so many hours in a day. Any target tough enough to survive that gets more individual attention in the form of their very own Blast 16. Failing that, it seems clear that bodies strong enough to take that kind of punishment and still stand must conceal a weak mind, so she goes to work on them with Mental Blast. If all that fails, she uses Mind Reading to try to discover the double-tough hero's weaknesses. Disintegration and Drain Constitution are used against people reliant on obvious Devices and people she bears a grudge (e.g., Harry Smilac, maybe soon the player characters).

Should it be the Death Angel who falls first, the villainess will either die or must be beaten nearly to that point, because she



## THE DEATH ANGEL

POWER LEVEL 16

Str 30	Dex 30	Con 30	Int 10	Wis 20	Cha 20
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**Skills:** Acrobatics 4 (+14), Bluff 4 (+9), Disable Device 4 (+4), Escape Artist 4 (+14), Intimidate 4 (+9), Notice 4 (+9), Search 4 (+4), Sense Motive 4 (+9), Stealth 4 (+14), Swim 4 (+14)

**Feats:** Evasion 2, Fearsome Presence 4, Move-By Action, Power Attack

**Powers:** Flight 10, Immunity 11 (critical hits, life support), **Magic 16** (Alternate Powers: **Blast 16** [magical energy], **Blast 7** [Burst Area, Selective, Affects Insubstantial], **Disintegration 6**, **Drain Constitution 8** [Ranged, Total Fade], **Mental Blast 8**, **Mind Control 16**, **Mind Reading 16** [Sensory Link]), **Mind Shield 10**, **Protection 6** (Impervious)

**Combat:** Attack +16, Grapple +26, Damage +10 (unarmed), Defense +16, Knockback -11, Initiative +10

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +16, Fortitude +10, Reflex +10, Will +5

**Abilities 26 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 84 + Combat 46 + Saves 19 - Drawbacks 2 = 182**

does not quit. The super-cops take her into custody, unsure of even their ability to hold her long. If that sounds like a set up for a sequel, well, *Time of Vengeance II: The Quickening* does have a ring to it, doesn't it?

There is a way to even the odds in battle for the Death Angel if she needs a little extra help. See **My Sweetest Friend** for more on that. If the heroes lose, they all die.

The Death Angel kills them all now or later, doesn't matter. They all wind up deader than Elvis.

Too much of a downer ending? No worries, Gamemaster. We've got ways the player characters can help themselves out (and talk about how you can go about saving them) in **Full of Broken Thoughts I Cannot Repair**.

## MY SWEETEST FRIEND

Besides Gamemaster Fiat, the easiest way to level the playing field for the Death Angel is to have her summon the members of the G'Tach whom the player characters weren't able to capture. They appear, as many as needed, from seemingly out of nowhere (i.e., surprise attack), at their full fighting strength.

If the heroes are nine for nine on putting the G'Tach behind bars, the Gamemaster can really solidify his heel status with the players and have the thought-jailed members show up. This option has risks ("You mean all those battles were for nothing?!"), but if exercised, any plague avatars save for those who successfully renounced their bargains with Mr. Infamy are available for call-up.

## FULL OF BROKEN THOUGHTS I CANNOT REPAIR

*Time of Vengeance* is a story about aspirations and the dark consequences that often come when those aspirations fail. It's about the difference between justice and revenge and those who cannot distinguish between them. These themes run throughout, but in addition to them, *Time of Vengeance* is meant to be a story of redemption.



If the conclusion amounts to the heroes and the G'Tach trading blows, the latter theme is lost. Not that a missing thematic element matters to anyone but the author, but it does have other consequences. Most importantly, it seriously reduces the good guys' chances of winning.

Having found revenge a hollow thing, what Virginia really wants is a little praise for her (albeit less than earth-shattering) superheroic career, forgiveness for her HUAC testimony, or a little understanding and acceptance. Unfortunately, she believes all these things are beyond her reach now that she has been granted everything she thought she wanted.

Any heroes who can breach the walls of resentment and anger and persuade her redemption is still possible can get her to halt her rampage. It won't be easy because doing so costs Virginia her life, but this section outlines what the heroes can do to make it happen.

## BENEATH THE STAIN OF TIME

As the heroes may have learned, a group of retirees from the Fens living at the Southside Retirement Castle had a monument built for the Scarlet Spectre back in 1997. Despite the bad press she got for testifying against the Liberty League, they each remembered the good she did for them personally. After a chance conversation about the Scarlet Spectre, they realized the good she'd done for the neighborhood as a whole.

Sadly, most of them know what it's like to be forgotten. They resolved the Scarlet Spectre would not be. They pooled their fixed incomes to cover the monument's cost of construction and to pay off Fens slum lord Harry Smilac for the ground to place it on. As per Virginia's lifetime luck, she had left the Retirement Castle by then. She was hospitalized undergoing cancer treatment and never learned about the belated honor paid her. Smilac, showing his true colors, by then had started stacking broken appliances around the monument.

The rumble with Tsfardeia uncovered the monument back in **Chapter 1**, and Mrs. Kemp may have told the heroes about it during their visit to the Retirement Castle. If the characters have taken notice of it, baiting the Death Angel towards the monument and then pointing it out to her is a snappy retort to her nonstop ranting about being forgotten. Doing so gives a hero a chance to unleash Virginia's guilt and end her reign of terror. The skill used is Diplomacy, and the DC is 20. Naturally, this is one of the best times for heroes to use some of those previously earned hero points. Success moves the story along to **What Have I Become?**

Players who haven't seen the monument might need some help still. Granted, this particular assist can leave the players feeling rescued by GM fiat, but it sure beats the heck out of being dead. If they're starting to lose the battle, give them one last Notice skill check against DC 15 to see it. Gamemasters absolutely determined to save the characters can have the Death Angel blast one of them into the monument. If they don't notice it then, at least you don't have to feel bad about killing them.

## TO SEE IF I STILL FEEL

Web-surfin' heroes may have learned of the comic-book character called "the Red Phantom," whom artist Darren Calvert based on an old photograph of the Scarlet Spectre. His art plus her good looks (and skimpy costume) have made Virginia's image into a cult icon. While she looks radically different now, the young girl

who always wanted to the star of her very own comic book is still inside the Death Angel somewhere.

Getting their hands on Red Phantom merchandise is easy if the heroes know where to look. They may already know about the Millennium Comics store (Knowledge (popular culture) skill check against DC 15 to find a character's inner comic-book geek), and may have visited there during a previous chapter. Depending on how much investigation they've done to this point, they may have even tracked down Darren Calvert at his home. If not, interacting with Freedom's comic-book community is outlined in **See You in the Funny Papers** back in **Chapter 2**.

Unless the player characters are complete jerks about it ("*Hey fanboy! Gimme that, you nerd!*"), both Jerry Webster and Darren Calvert are happy to part with as much Red Phantom merch as the heroes can carry. They do stop them occasionally and say "*Could you leave that one in the box? Otherwise, the collectible value is shot*" or "*That's a HeroesCon Charlotte exclusive! Don't take that one!*" but not enough to put a dent in the heroes' potential haul. Both are too happy to help real superheroes save their city to protest too much.

Showing the Death Angel a big stack of t-shirts, posters, action figures, and comic books bearing the image of her in her prime is a long-standing dream of hers realized. Virginia has had precious little of that in her life, and whoever shows her this concrete proof she is not only remembered, but idolized (at least in effigy) gets a Diplomacy skill check versus DC 20. If successful, Virginia realizes the mistakes she's made, and **What Have I Become?** describes the results.

## YOU ARE SOMEONE ELSE

In addition to the pile of comic-book collectibles, the heroes may want to add a personal touch to their pitch. Virginia has a rather low opinion of costumed folk, so to her the words of a regular person carry a lot more weight. Since plucking a random comic-book fan off the street could lead to unpredictable results ("*But I only read anime books!*"), Jerry Webster and Darren Calvert are the heroes' two best bets.

Both are still eager to help out, even to this highly dangerous degree. Webster doesn't want to close up his store, but since it's not a Wednesday, he relents. He's an experienced salesman ("*Trust me, kid, you **need** the variant cover version*") and thus a smoother orator than Darren Calvert, but both speak from the heart. In the end, that's what really matters here.

After the player characters direct her attention their way, Calvert and/or Webster speak to the Death Angel as only a comic-book fan can, of heroes and how they inspire non-superheroic people. Those words speak directly to Virginia's heart, even as some of their finer points are lost on her ("*Castle made me change the name because they were afraid you'd sue!*" and "*They sold the movie rights. Studio is pushing for Jennifer Garner to play you*").

The testimony of two people who believe in heroes as much as she once did strikes home with Virginia. Their words help her realize she's become something unrecognizable to herself. She ceases her attacks while they talk and the DC of Diplomacy skill checks against her with the merch and the testimonials drop to DC 18.

## I WEAR THIS CROWN OF THORNS

Sorry seems to be the hardest word, especially when the apology is directed at a homicidal embodiment of an Old Testament plague.



Things are even more difficult when it's not the player characters seeking forgiveness.

The Death Angel's ceaseless ranting about being a woman scorned takes on full meaning for characters aware of Virginia North's HUAC testimony. She speaks of herself as a martyr who did what she did for her country, but underneath her pronouncements she at least suspects her hurt and jealousy were the real driving factors.

Whether she truly wants vindication or absolution, there are only a few people who can grant either to her. Johnny Wade is incommunicado on a fishing trip outside the city, and Dr. Atom's program is still being literally debugged. That leaves three possibilities, some better than others, outlined in the sections following.

## I WOULD KEEP MYSELF

If he's up and about after Dever's assassination attempt on his son, there's a good chance the heroes made fast friends with Michael O'Connor, Sr. and got his cell-phone number. The O'Connors' health is key here. Michael Sr.'s spirit is willing, but removing him from the hospital causes him to die because of the weakness of the flesh. If one of Death Angels minions gravely hurt his son, Michael Sr. is in no mood to do anything for Virginia other than seriously injure her.

Barring those circumstances, O'Connor Sr. would sacrifice himself a thousand times over to save Freedom City and its residents, so he's more than willing to put his life on the line one more time. While he lacks formal Diplomacy skill, he knows what needs to be said to Virginia. Spinning his words the right way (i.e., the actual

Diplomacy skill check) he leaves to the player characters.

Michael, Sr. dons his old mask (to protect Michael, Jr.) for the occasion, but his voice is so imprinted on her mind Virginia has no trouble identifying him from that alone. After he opens his mouth, the Death Angel stops still while she hears him speak.

The former Freedom Eagle apologizes for not treating her better all those years ago, and says, *"We were wrong to ignore someone with your kind of dedication to being a hero."* He sums up the HUAC debacle by saying, *"I don't know why you did what you did, but like a lot of people back then, I know you must've had good reasons. No hard feelings, and I'm sorry for what happened to you afterwards."*

O'Connor Sr. and his Sense Motive reads the Death Angel like a book, and when he's done speaking, he's told Virginia almost everything she's ever wanted to hear. All it takes is a Diplomacy check by a player character against DC 20 to move Virginia from pissed off to penitent, the results of which are the focus of **What Have I Become?** below.

## THE OLD FAMILIAR STING

The player characters may also enlist the aid of Brian Nisbet, the Scarlet Spectre's "archenemy." He's just as glad to see the heroes as before, and his delight and enthusiasm do not diminish in the slightest no matter how dreadful the situation with the Death Angel is described as being.

Nisbet is genuinely excited about getting back into the super-powered game again. Deep down he knows he's probably not coming back from this mission, but having paid his debt to society long ago, he's ready for his eternal rest. Death means he goes out as a famous superhuman and he's never wanted to meet his maker any other way. Naturally, he dons his complete Bee-Keeper costume for the occasion.

Once on the scene, the characters realize immediately how Nisbet is able to make a living off autograph shows and selling crap on the Internet. His words are a perfect balance of flattery towards the Scarlet Spectre and offering to give himself up, but only to *"the real hero I knew back in the '50s."*

Again, it takes a hero to put the non-player character's awesome assist into the net. A Diplomacy check by against DC 20 brings on Virginia's heartbreak, as per **What Have I Become?** below.

Note the player characters may opt to bring along other residents of the Retirement Castle (such as Mrs. Kemp) in addition to or instead of Brian Nisbet. For much the same reasons as he, they're eager despite the hazards to help the city. Successfully following up their heartfelt, fond remembrances of the Scarlet Spectre and the gratitude they feel towards her give the player characters a Diplomacy skill check against DC 18 to achieve a breakthrough.

## UPON MY LIAR'S CHAIR

The last (and worst) option is Harry Smilac. Finding him is easy if he's alive (even easier if he's dead, but he's much less useful then). Harry's still in his rattrap tenement building, his own natural B.O. desensitizing him to the dead frog smell outside.

No amount of Diplomacy or logic can convince Harry to help. He knows what the heroes must at least suspect, and that is Virginia will kill him on sight. The characters might use Intimidate skill, Mind Control, or good old fashioned kidnapping to get him to come along anyway, and if they do, the following happens.



The Death Angel pauses to hear Harry out, but even with his life in jeopardy he can't help being a jerk. Once he's verbally given himself enough rope, she does in fact kill him. Beyond their own culpability in his death, the characters are free not to mourn for Harry and still feel like heroes.

## I WOULD FIND A WAY

At the risk of having the scenario turn into an apocalyptic episode of *This Is Your Life*, there are no penalties for repeated efforts trying to get through to Virginia's conscience. Therefore, if they knock the Death Angel through the roof of Castle Comics straight into a rack of Red Phantom action figures and later fetch the Bee-Keeper to talk to her, both attempts are allowed without added DC penalties.

In fact, the player characters find there are rewards to be had even in failure. All worthy efforts (GM's judgment) to stir Virginia's conscience, successful or not, cause the Death Angel to de-escalate the level of violence she employs. As the heroes continue to reach out to her, she stops using her area-effect attacks and Drain Constitution. Further attempts discourage her to stop using her mental powers, until eventually, she's only acting in self-defense.

On subsequent Diplomacy skill checks directed at the Death Angel, the Gamemaster may wish to grant a bonus (+1 or +2) for previous attempts. This can simulate a gradual wearing down of Virginia's mental defenses, as well as a growing sense on her part the characters must really care since they persist so. Also, these bonuses can help bring the scenario to a satisfactory conclusion before the players reach their wits' end after three or four failed attempts.

If, on the other hand, the hero team features a super-charismatic character with a high Diplomacy bonus (+10 or more), the GM may want to increase the Diplomacy check DCs by 5–10 just to ensure things are at least a little challenging when it comes to talking Virginia out of her lifelong dream of vengeance. Otherwise, the conclusion of the adventure might seem a bit sudden (and silly) in light of the mass destruction she's caused.

Never forget the importance in the actual role-playing. Heartfelt, well-reasoned arguments articulated by the players deserve a bonus, if nothing else to reward all their previous detective work looking into Virginia's past. By the same token, poor role-playing needs to be penalized on die checks. If you allow the scenario to end because of a character saying, "*Quit it, you crazy old bat!*" and a killer die result, you wipe out all the good that has gone before in favor of the cheesiest ending possible.

## DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN

If the player characters don't get to her first, the Death Angel appears at first light over the City Center, accompanied by all the other G'Tach members not captured in previous chapters. This stands in great contrast to the one-on-one fight they would've had if they'd found her in the Fens first. Feel free to lecture them after the game on the virtues of being proactive, Gamemaster. Other than the fact she's got her posse with her, the Death Angel proceeds tactically just as described in **Try to Kill it All Away**. Her fellow G'Tach members act under her direction, and that direction is very simple: kill everything.

The heroes can still try to appeal to the better angels of her nature as outlined under **Full of Broken Thoughts I Cannot Repair** in all such ways available to them. Naturally, the presence of the other G'Tach members are going to complicate matters a

great deal, as they try to kill off the heroes' "friendly witnesses" before they get a chance to speak and the like.

The heroes are also handicapped in this situation by the much greater likelihood of meaningful collateral damage. There are a plethora of city landmarks, important buildings, and helpless civilians ready to make the villain's lives easier. The bad guys are there to kill, and thus there's nothing they won't do to distract the player characters if it comes to that. Toppling a bridge or a skyscraper or chucking a few kids off a roof—doesn't matter to the G'Tach. It does matter to the heroes, and the baddies are quite ready to take advantage of that.

## HELP ME

A fight in the City Center puts the heroes at a disadvantage in many ways. It may very well be the odds are stacked against them to such a degree where they wind up losing. Since that also means they probably wind up dead (and Freedom City definitely so), the option of sending in the cavalry to save them is a tempting one for a Gamemaster to exercise. This section gives some hints on how to do this in the best way, if the possibility becomes an eventuality.

The best reason to send the player characters some extra help is if they are losing the battle for reasons other than the Death Angel kicking their backsides. If the heroes are being denied victory because of Kinim's flea army or the G'Tach's constant harassment of innocent bystanders, that's a great time to send in some backup. In addition to boosting the heroes' chances, it puts the dramatic focus back where it belongs, and that's on the player characters vs. the Death Angel.

Once the GM is ready to press the panic button, the question turns to who should serve as the cavalry. Again, there are better and worse choices here. The Next-Gen, the Atom Family (minus Max, of course) and Jenni Rocket are great choices because the player characters helped them out earlier. It's much easier for players to accept help if it's from a group returning a favor owed to their characters. Jenni Rocket is particularly useful, as her powers and temperament make her ideal for rescuing innocent bystanders from danger.

In cases where things are going extremely bad for the player characters, the Gamemaster may consider sending in heroes who have not previously appeared during the scenario, like Foreshadow or the Freedom League. This is to be an option of last resort for two reasons. First, their appearances make it pretty obvious the Gamemaster is bailing out the player characters simply because they're the player characters, logic and proportion be damned.

Second, *Time of Vengeance* is supposed to be about the characters' team establishing itself in a city the Freedom League has vacated in favor of going global. That can't happen if a major crisis like the G'Tach's onslaught ends with the Freedom League beaming in from space and saving the day.

## WHAT HAVE I BECOME?

Assuming the Gamemaster doesn't want Freedom City rendered barren, the heroes finally triumph over the Death Angel and the rest of the G'Tach. If breaking the Death Angel emotionally does it, her final moments on the stage that is world go as follows. For drama's sake, use as much Gamemaster Fiat and outside inference as it takes to make sure the rest of the G'Tach is out of the way at this point.

The defeated Death Angel's form begins to dissolve, and a trail of energy appears to evaporate from her body. She slowly floats to Earth like a falling leaf, eventually coming to rest in the nearest ground-level area (preferably an open one—more dramatic that way). When the heroes finally reach her, she has completely reverted back to her natural form, that of a frail 78-year-old woman showing the ravages of her terminal cancer. She has renounced her dark side, Mr. Infamy's deal, and as it happens, her very life.

With or without any actual Medicine skill, it's obvious Virginia is dying. Her eyes are filled with tears, and spring not from the end of her life nearly so much as the realization of how much of it she wasted on jealousy and self-delusion. All but her very last labored breaths carry the words, *"I'm sorry. So very, very sorry."*

Unless the hero team is utterly devoid of compassion and remains aloof, one of the player characters becomes the recipient of her last words. Holding back the tears with her final ounce of strength, Virginia says, *"I'd have given anything to have been a real hero."* With that, all her mortal pain is at an end.

## THE TRUTH HURTS

Partly by accident and partly by design, the player characters now carry with them the sum of all memories of a human life. While it may not be great, they are the guardians of Virginia North's legacy. Everything she did in this life now amounts to what the characters remember of her and choose to share.

The media soon get all up in the heroes' grill, wanting to know what brought about such a terrible ordeal upon the city. What they say in response is a measure of what they consider to be just.

They may of course tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This sends reporters all over the world back to their morgues, and resurrects the very worst things said and written about Virginia back in 1955. In addition to being a "perjurer who named names," a drunk, and a slut, she is now remembered as one of the greatest mass murderers in history.

As a result, an angry mob finds the tiny monument to the good she did and smashes it to dust. Castle Comics hastily cancels the Red Phantom comic book, sending an unemployed Darren Calvert back home to Alberta. Whether or not their actions led to everyone "getting what they deserve" in this case is up to the players to decide.

## PRINT THE LEGEND

The heroes may instead choose to tell a few white lies in the interests of what they deem to be just. They may feign ignorance, leaving Virginia's legacy in the hands of the media to make of as they will based on her public pronouncements. If they see her primarily as a victim, they may place the blame solely on Mr. Infamy, reciting a half-truth that Virginia was involved but "possessed and not in control of her own actions." They may even go so far as to remember only her dying apology, and paint her as a courageous figure who sacrificed herself to end the threat of the G'Tach.

If the heroes exculpate Virginia or go so far as to make her out to be a hero, they witness an amazing series of events over the next few days and weeks. Reporters curious over who Virginia North and the Scarlet Spectre were publish stories culled from people she helped, including the ladies at the Southside Retirement Castle. For once, the media focus on someone grateful for the attention.

That goes double for Mr. Nisbet. The former Bee-Keeper diplomatically refers to her as "one of the few heroes who ever defeated me." Fortunately for him, the reporters prove uninterested in checking out this claim, so both Virginia and he wind up with shinier legacies than they ever thought possible. Hers is sealed when city inspectors condemn a certain tenement building and file charges against its owner Harry Smilac, earning him a long prison term. With the tenement gone, the lot becomes that rarest of things in the Fens, a beautiful park, with a new greatly enlarged monument to the Scarlet Spectre as its centerpiece.

The Bee-Keeper's website becomes more popular than ever, and young Freedonians wearing black and yellow striped apparel purchased there becomes a common sight, no doubt to the amusement of the player characters. Based on his published accounts, Darren Calvert adds the Bee-Keeper to the Red Phantom's rogues gallery. The resulting royalty fees guarantee Mr. Nisbet a stipend to live on should the Bee-Keeper craze ever subside.

Perhaps the best news of all comes about a month after the *Time of Vengeance* ends. The word comes from both sides of the law (and eventually into print)—the Fens has a new guardian. She's described as a beautiful young woman clad in a stunning red costume, dispensing justice with just her wits and fists in an area threatening to become more lawless than ever. The criminals she's handed over to the authorities say the new hero goes by a familiar name: the Scarlet Spectre.





# AFTERMATH

Little by little, life in Freedom City returns to normal. With the Death Angel defeated, the faucets and fountains emit good old H<sub>2</sub>O (if they weren't already, thanks to Eldrich), and the player characters' triumph convinces people to return to their homes and jobs.

With the roads finally clear, normal traffic in and out of the city resumes, and the disaster relief the city so desperately needs arrives at last. Armed National Guardsmen help restore order and a detachment of U.S. Army doctors joins physicians volunteering from all over the world to restore the city's health. This includes young Max Atom (and the O'Connors if they were hurt).

The Salvation Army and Red Cross lead the charge of charitable organizations that see to it the city's needy are fed and clothed until Freedom gets back on its feet, which it accomplishes in record time much to the relief and astonishment of the entire world. It's proof positive, Mayor O'Connor says, of what happens when you never lose your faith in heroes—they come from all walks of life, and not all of them wear capes and tights.

One dark lining in the silver cloud is the surviving members of the G'Tach. Even with the Death Angel banished (and maybe other members renouncing their powers as well), the majority of the group remains, all very powerful and possessed of bad intentions. They are in custody, but as the heroes know, no supervillain stays locked up forever. The instigator Mr. Infamy remains at large, perhaps with an eye towards replacing the missing members of the G'Tach in order to try, try again.

In the end, Freedom City is stronger and safer than before, and regards itself as being left in good hands now the player characters' team has filled the void left by the Freedom League's departure. In addition, the team now has friends and connections throughout the city's superhero community, from the newest rookies to its most seasoned veterans; all in all, not bad. Not bad at all.

## AWARDING HERO POINTS

Although it's the final scene, don't overlook the possibility of awarding hero points since the characters are going to need them to survive and overcome the Death Angel. Here are some possibilities for awards during the finale:

- **Setbacks:** The most significant reversals the heroes can endure are trying and failing to convince Virginia North to give up the powers of the Death Angel. Whoever takes point on getting in the psycho demigod's face even after repeated failures deserves at least one hero point, which the heroes can use in further attempts to convince the villainess to stop her rampage.
- **Heroism:** The characters may also earn points for acts of heroism if the final battle takes place in the City Center. Innocents are almost certain to be endangered, and costumed types who rise to the occasion and save them deserve recognition. Oh, and hero points.
- **Roleplaying:** As stated, the city can be won or lost depending on how well the player characters convince Virginia of the error of her ways. In a very real sense, their role-playing

is *the* critical factor in deciding if *Time of Vengeance* ends in triumph and redemption or defeat and annihilation. Any players whose (melo)dramatic skills prove up to this mighty task deserve some hero point props from the GM.

- **Stunts:** If words fail, actions must do. Since the player characters are quite frankly outclassed by their opposition in **Chapter 4**, any strategy or tactic that evens the odds or leads to winning the day should get a gold star. Well, that and a hero point.

## AWARDING POWER POINTS

At the end of the adventure, award each hero a power point for stalwart defense of Freedom City against the G'Tach. If the heroes handled things particularly well—talking Virginia down and safeguarding her memory—give them an extra power point. You might also award a bonus power point for exceptional roleplaying or quick thinking during the adventure that enhanced everyone's enjoyment.

In addition to the more tangible reward of power points, the heroes have almost certainly earned the gratitude of Freedom City (unless things went very, very badly). They've most likely cemented their reputation as the city's protectors and earned the trust and appreciation of their fellow heroes as well as their fellow citizens. Knowing Virginia North's story, they should know how precious those things can be.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES

Although the heroes have (hopefully) put an end to the most serious threat to Freedom City, there remain a number of potential plots you can spin off of *Time of Vengeance* as the heroes become known and trusted defenders of the city of Freedom.

## VENGEANCE IS OURS

Any surviving members of the G'Tach not cured of their various delusions or encouraged to reject Mr. Infamy's "gifts" remain potential threats. The survivors might band together under the leadership of one of their number (Chosehech is the most likely, but it could be any of them, as you see fit). One of their first orders of business will likely be eliminating the heroes who defeated them on their last outing.

If the group's numbers are severely depleted by the events of this adventure, the remaining G'Tach may either look for new recruits (whether aided by Mr. Infamy or not) or they could end up joining other groups or striking out on their own to follow their particular agendas. The *Freedom City* sourcebook can provide some inspiration for villainous team-ups and alliances.

## LIVING IN INFAMY

Even if all of the G'Tach are soundly defeated and stripped of their powers, there's still the matter of Mr. Infamy, who remains at large to trouble the heroes again in the future. The sinister deal-maker may try to tempt the heroes again with offers of power, or seek his own particular revenge by empowering individual foes for Freedom City's newest heroes, granting power to people who want to do the heroes harm in order to humble them.

# APPENDIX: HEROES & VILLAINS

The cast of *Time of Vengeance* is large, with ten new supervillains, and a new super-heroine, not to mention the supporting cast and the tragic history of the Scarlet Spectre.

This Appendix describes the major characters in the adventure (both heroes and villains), along with their game information and backgrounds.

## JENNI ROCKET

POWER LEVEL 8

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+1	+2	+1	+1
12	16	12	14	12	12
TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL		
+1	+5	+13	+4		

**Skills:** Acrobatics 4 (+7), Disable Device 6 (+8), Knowledge (history) 6 (+8), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (teacher) 7 (+8), Search 7 (+9)

**Feats:** Dodge Focus 4, Evasion, Instant Up, Move-By Action, Quick Change

**Powers:** **Super-Speed 8** (2,500 MPH, *Power Feats:* Water Run, *Alternate Powers:* **Strike 8**)

**Combat:** Attack +7 (melee), Grapple +8, Damage +8 (Strike), Defense +11 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback -0, Initiative +35

**Abilities 18 + Skills 9 (36 ranks) + Feats 8 + Powers 41 + Combat 28 + Saves 17 = 121**

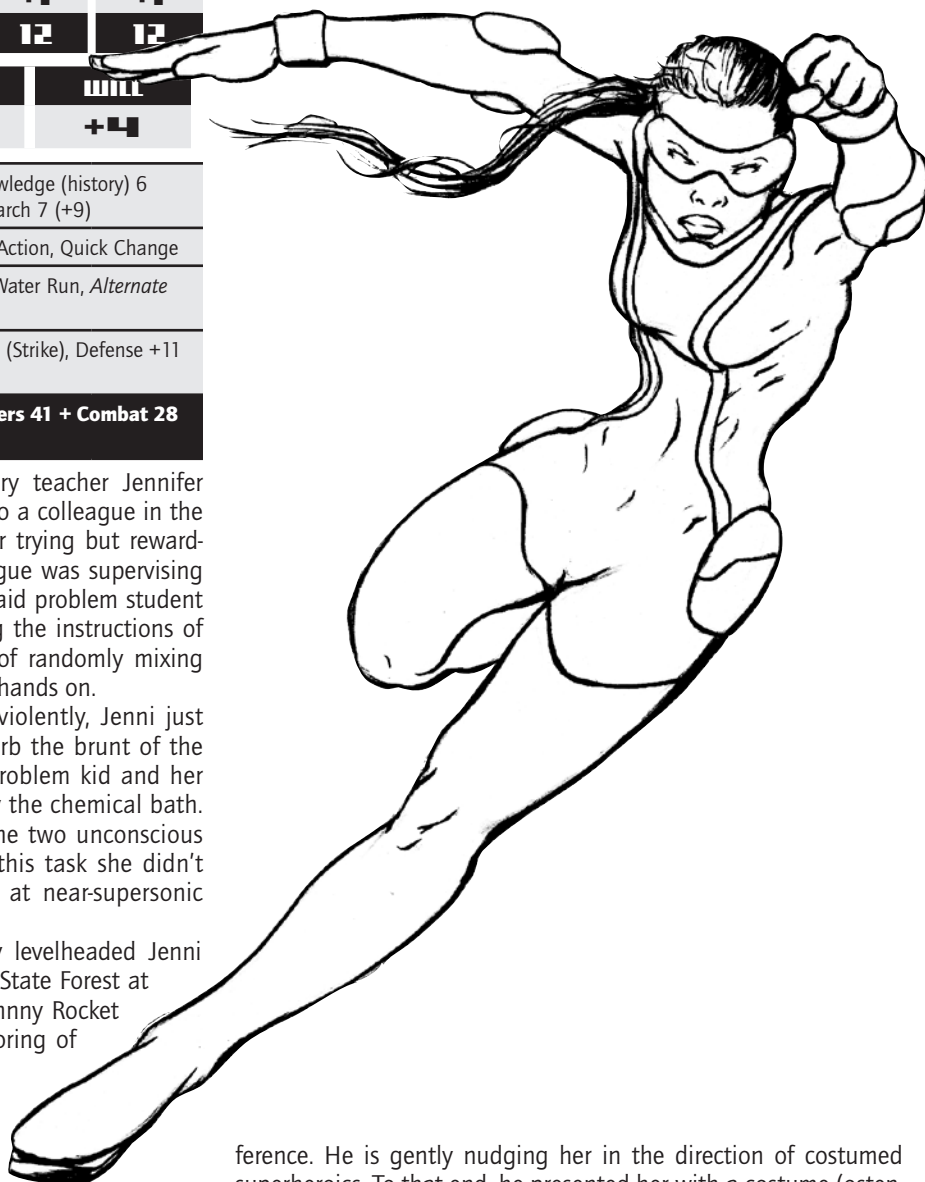
**Background:** Roosevelt High School history teacher Jennifer Alexander intended to say a quick goodbye to a colleague in the science lab and then go home after another trying but rewarding school day. When she arrived, her colleague was supervising a problem student's after-school detention. Said problem student was busy trying to earn his rep, disregarding the instructions of his make-up chemistry assignment in favor of randomly mixing whatever chemicals he could sneakily get his hands on.

When the combined substances reacted violently, Jenni just happened to be in the precise spot to absorb the brunt of the reaction. The fumes quickly overcame the problem kid and her friend, but Jenni was strangely unharmed by the chemical bath. She recovered her wits and moved to get the two unconscious people to safety. Jenni was so focused on this task she didn't immediately notice that the job got done at near-supersonic speed.

By the time she did notice, the normally levelheaded Jenni panicked. She was headed into the Wharton State Forest at Mach 3 and unsure of how to stop when Johnny Rocket finally caught up to her. Thus did his mentoring of her, and their strong friendship, begin.

Mild-mannered Jenni is uncertain at this point if she wants to be a costumed crime fighter. As far she's concerned, all Johnny is teaching her is how to control her abilities safely. Johnny, on the other hand, senses the young teacher's dedication and desire to make a positive dif-

ference. He is gently nudging her in the direction of costumed superheroics. To that end, he presented her with a costume (ostensibly just to protect her identity) and his blessing to use "Rocket" in her code name (should she, you know, ever need one...).





## THE DEATH ANGEL

**POWER LEVEL 16**

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+10	+10	+10	+0	+5	+5
30	30	30	10	20	20

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+16	+10	+10	+5

**Skills:** Acrobatics 4 (+14), Bluff 4 (+9), Disable Device 4 (+4), Escape Artist 4 (+14), Intimidate 4 (+9), Notice 4 (+9), Search 4 (+4), Sense Motive 4 (+9), Stealth 4 (+14), Swim 4 (+14)

**Feats:** Evasion 2, Fearsome Presence 4, Move-By Action, Power Attack

**Powers:** **Flight 10**, **Immunity 11** (critical hits, life support), **Magic 16** (Alternate Powers: **Blast 16** [magical energy], **Blast 7** [Burst Area, Selective, Affects Insubstantial], **Disintegration 6**, **Drain Constitution 8** [Ranged, Total Fade], **Mental Blast 8**, **Mind Control 16**, **Mind Reading 16** [Sensory Link]), **Mind Shield 10**, **Protection 6** (Impervious)

**Combat:** Attack +16, Grapple +26, Damage +10 (unarmed), Defense +16, Knockback -11, Initiative +10

**Abilities 26 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 84 + Combat 46 + Saves 19 - Drawbacks 2 = 182**

**Background:** As the Death Angel, Virginia is an awesomely powerful being, beyond even all her previous aspirations. The young Virginia would've been overjoyed, but in her current state the only delight she feels stems from being cancer-free and mobile for the first time in a decade. No longer under a death sentence, she dedicates herself to carrying out one on Freedom City.

Her plan comes from two sources. The first is Mr. Infamy's suggestions, from whence all "the Ten Plagues of Egypt" elements came from (the G'Tach's powers, the plagues appearing in threes and in order). Because all the members of the G'Tach got their orders from her, they assume the Death Angel is the mastermind. At the very least, they sensed her power and zealotry to a degree more than sufficient to banish any thought of not obeying her commands.

The choice of targets was all hers, and that's why the G'Tach's scheme is so bizarre. Courtesy of Mr. Infamy, the group has the power of demigods, and thanks to Virginia, they use them to get revenge for petty and imagined slights from a half-century ago.

To that end, Virginia dispatched Dam, Arov, and Choshech to exact a toll on the city that ignored and scorned her. Places like the Claremont Academy were just unlucky targets of opportunity for avatars told to "go kill the young people" and the like. She heard about the Super Museum's new Golden Age exhibit while in the hospital, but without any mention of her. Shkhin and Dever were tasked with avenging that particular insult, on the Museum and the Mayor who sanctioned it, respectively.

The rest were sent after people whom she felt had done her the greatest wrongs, at least in the estimation of her failing and extremely embittered memory. Tsfardeia's mission was to kill Harry Smilac, whose eviction put her non-superheroic life into a permanent downward spiral. Smilac, unbeknownst to him, seized her Scarlet Spectre accouterments and, typically for him, wound up tossing them in a dumpster.

Kinim and Barad were sent as payback for the moment that destroyed the last of her superheroic dreams: that fateful day at the Liberty League headquarters back in 1955. They were meant to kill Dr. Alexander Atom and the elder Johnny Wade for breaking her heart.



She would've sent someone after the Freedom Eagle too if (like Atom and Wade) his identity was public knowledge, but wound up doing so by accident once she targeted the Mayor.

She remembered the Bee-Keeper from hearing the nurses at the Southside Retirement Castle talk about him endlessly and fondly, and the resulting jealousy—plus the trauma of their initial meeting—was enough to earn him her wrath in the form of Arbeh. The Bee-Keeper was one of the very few costumed supervillains she ever encountered. She loathed both the fear he caused her as well as his intrusion into what she regarded as her sanctuary.

Now that she's reborn as the Death Angel, Virginia still regards Tyler Elementary as a refuge. Throughout her career as a super-

hero, it was a place she could hide out—even gangsters didn't want to shoot up a school back in those days. As time passed, it also symbolized the last time in her life things were uncomplicated. It was natural for her to choose it as the G'Tach's base of operations, and she has remained there ever since her transformation, pondering her lives, old and new. The abandoned school is also where she summoned the plague avatars from the extradimensional limbo in which Mr. Infamy "stored" them until needed.

Now Virginia no longer has to fear death, obscurity, or the vicissitudes of others. In short, the entire focus of her life to this point has been erased. So now she wonders; about the future, and why getting everything she wanted still hasn't made her happy.

## THE SCARLET SPECTRE (GOLDEN AGE HERO)

POWER LEVEL 6

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+3	+1	+2	+2
14	16	16	12	14	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+5	+5	+5	+8

**Skills:** Acrobatics 5 (+8), Bluff 5 (+7), Disable Device 5 (+6), Escape Artist 5 (+8), Gather Information 5 (+7), Intimidate 5 (+7), Investigate 5 (+6), Knowledge (current events, popular culture, streetwise) 5 (+6), Notice 5 (+7), Profession (secretary) 5 (+7), Search 5 (+6), Sense Motive 5 (+7), Stealth 5 (+8), Swim 5 (+7)

**Feats:** Attractive 3, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Elusive Target, Equipment 3, Improved Block, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Sneak Attack, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack

**Equipment:** flashlight, handcuffs, heavy pistol, multi-tool, smoke pellets

**Combat:** Attack +5, Grapple +7, Damage +4 (heavy pistol), +2 (unarmed), Defense +5, Knockback -2, Initiative +3

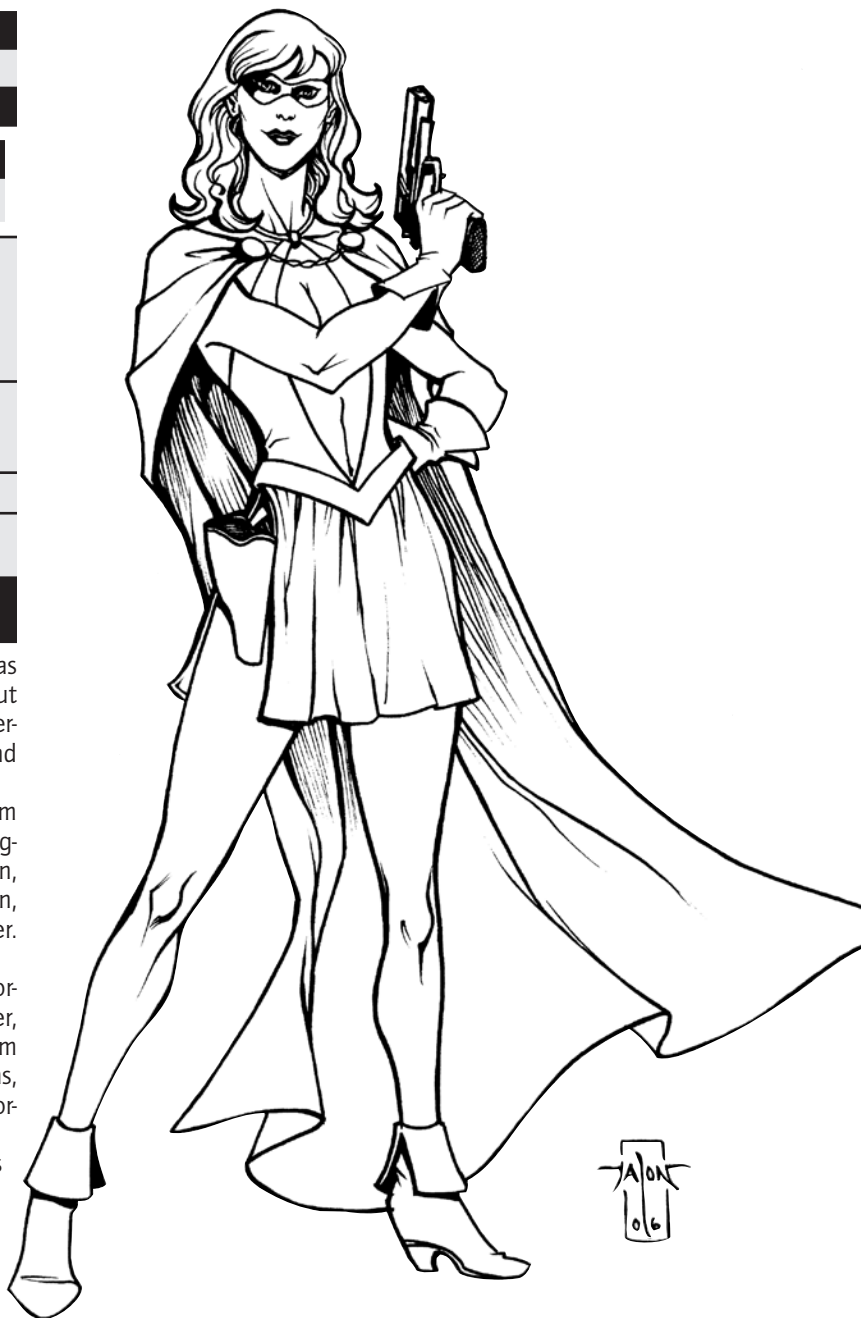
**Abilities 26 + Skills 20 (80 ranks) + Feats 15 + Combat 20 + Saves 9 = 90**

**Background:** Virginia North's upbringing in the Fens was summed up perfectly by Oscar Wilde: she lived in the gutter but was always looking up at the stars. Growing up poor and fatherless during the Great Depression, she had a lot of trouble and hardship in her life to look up—and away—from.

When she did, she saw more than the heavens. In the Freedom City of the 1940s, a person could often catch a glimpse of figures racing against the night sky and wonder if it was Centurion, Dr. Tomorrow, or the Freedom Eagle rushing to the rescue. Soon, these costumed heroes became more than just a diversion for her. The focus of her life was to be one of them.

By the time she turned 19, Virginia earned, begged, and borrowed enough money to costume and equip herself. Soon after, she ventured forth as the Scarlet Spectre for the first time. Her aim was to battle crime whenever it reared its ugly head in the Fens, which was a lot. Still, Virginia did her best to protect the neighborhood where she'd lived her whole young life.

Sometimes, her revealing costume and a swift kick to a thug's sensitive area was all it took to save an innocent bystander. Other times, tougher solutions were called for, and she shot the bad guys with her late father's .45 or ran them down with a car. When all else failed and circumstances left her badly out-





matched (which was a lot of the time), she ran away, vowing to fight again another day.

None of those methods were especially clever, but they got the job done. At the very least, it let her accomplish things as well as

she could, alone and lacking any real superhuman abilities. She continued her quixotic crusade until 1955, when she made her fateful decision to testify against the Liberty League at the HUAC hearings.

## BACK IN TIME

One of the more interesting possibilities for a follow-up (or prequel) adventure scenario to *Time of Vengeance* is to send the player characters back in time to postwar Freedom City during the period when Virginia North was still active as the original Scarlet Spectre. To that end, page 52 shows what her stats were like during the prime of her crime-fighting career in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

## USING THE GOLDEN AGE SCARLET SPECTRE

In a prequel scenario, the Scarlet Spectre works best as a background or supporting character. Otherwise, if the player characters get to know Virginia too well (in or out of costume), much of the mystery and suspense in *Time of Vengeance* is lost. Follow-up adventures raise all sorts of important questions for the player characters to deal with.

## PREQUELS

It is strongly advised the Scarlet Spectre be restricted to a cameo appearance. Perhaps the player characters need or want to check out a lead in the Fens during the course of the "flashback" adventure, seeking out any resident heroes in the area for information. Alternatively (and more likely), the hero-struck Virginia eagerly approaches *them*, ready and (over)anxious to offer her help and "expertise."

More than likely, Virginia's teenage fan club fawning combined with her total inability to actually help drive the player characters nuts. They probably soon take their leave of her, but go with the essential knowledge she's an underpowered but enthusiastic soul who's in way over her head. Before *Time of Vengeance* begins, that's all they need to know.

If the heroes have no particular reason to go looking around the Fens, it's easy enough just to have them travel through it at some point and see the Scarlet Spectre in action, stopping some minor crime. Even if they continue on their way, the Gamemaster has still done a cool bit of foreshadowing and that's always worth serious GM Cool Points. If the player characters stop to investigate or help out, events can be played out as described above.

It is well worth noting how the player characters treated the Scarlet Spectre during their encounter. If they are polite to her or nice enough to take her seriously as a superheroine (at least pretend to), that's something Virginia is likely to remember even five decades later. This small act of kindness can pay major dividends when the moment comes to try to talk the Death Angel out of destroying the city.

## SEQUELS

Heroes who encounter Virginia during the heyday (such as it was) of her career as the Scarlet Spectre after they've fought against her as the Death Angel will get to live through situations that are chock-full of good-awkward moments for the Gamemaster. Seriously, we're taking "stuck in the line at the DMV next to your ex-girlfriend" level here.

A meeting with her in the 1940s or 50s can be set up in a sequel story just as it's described above for prequels. The main difference, of course, is the heroes' reactions to someone they mostly know as a demigod-level rampaging psychopath.

The great news for the Gamemaster is that the encounter can be as long or as short as desired. Virginia can show up just long enough to make the heroes feel really, really weird, or she can stick around for the duration of their stay in the past. She can be kept around because the plot dictates (for some reason, the heroes really need her help or knowledge of something), or due to Virginia's own natural puppy-like inclination to follow capes around.

Once attached, the player characters can focus on not saying what everyone in the group is thinking, which definitely earns them some hero points if they role-play it well. The same reward is given if somebody blurts out some uncomfortable bit of future knowledge but the group manages to explain it away satisfactorily. Either way, the tone can be somber as the players mourn the fact they can't change the sad course of Virginia's life, or light if everyone at the kitchen table decides to just go with how uncomfortable (and funny) their current situation is.

## TIME PASSAGES

Wild tangents are possible if some well-meaning soul tries to warn Virginia about the bad choices she makes in the years to come, despite all good reasons to the contrary. A Gamemaster who wants to keep events focused on other issues can have Virginia laugh it all off, sure in her naiveté it's all just crazy talk. There's no way she'd ever betray "her friends" in the Liberty League and become a villain. With that, she goes on to meet her destiny.

Of course, the Gamemaster can also have a shocked (but ultimately grateful) Virginia heed the warning from the future, and go on to change the course of her life. Naturally, when the heroes return to their own era, things are completely different due to their interference in the proper course of history.

The specifics of how and why things are bad in the altered history are up to the Gamemaster. Once the heroes have had enough altered-timeline shock and horror, it's time for a ticked-off Dr. Tomorrow to pull up in his time ship, ready with a lecture on how the players screwed up and how they now have to help him put things back to rights. But that's another adventure....

# THE G'TACH

The G'Tach, named for the Biblical Plagues visited upon Egypt, is a "team" of villains only in the loosest sense. Individually "gifted" with power by Mr. Infamy, the members each have their own unique agendas (and psychological issues). They follow

Death Angel simply because she's the most powerful of their number and that's what Mr. Infamy told them to do. One some levels, the G'Tach are more to be pitied, and need outside help to overcome their own darkness and reject the path they've chosen.

## AROV (FLIES)

POWER LEVEL 12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+5	+6	-1	+0	-3
12	20	22	8	10	4

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+10	+17	+5

**Skills:** Climb 5 (+6), Computers 4 (+3), Gather Information 5 (+2), Intimidate 4 (+1), Knowledge (current events) 5 (+4), Notice 4 (+4), Profession (journalist) 5 (+5)

**Feats:** Ambidexterity, Attack Focus (melee), Evasion 2, Fearsome Presence 4, Improved Critical 10 (Corrosion), Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Uncanny Dodge (visual)

**Powers:** **Additional Limbs 2** (insect legs), **Corrosion 8** (saliva), **Environmental Control 12** (swarms of flies, Dc 10 distraction, *Flaws:* Touch Range), **Flight 3**, **Immunity 9** (life support), **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Super-Movement 2** (wall-crawling)

**Combat:** Attack +12 (melee), +11 (ranged), Grapple +13, Damage +1 (unarmed), +8 (Corrosion), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +13

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (toxins and poisons, moderate, +50% DC, -2 points)

**Abilities 16 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 23 + Powers 61 + Combat 46 + Saves 21 - Drawbacks 2 = 181**

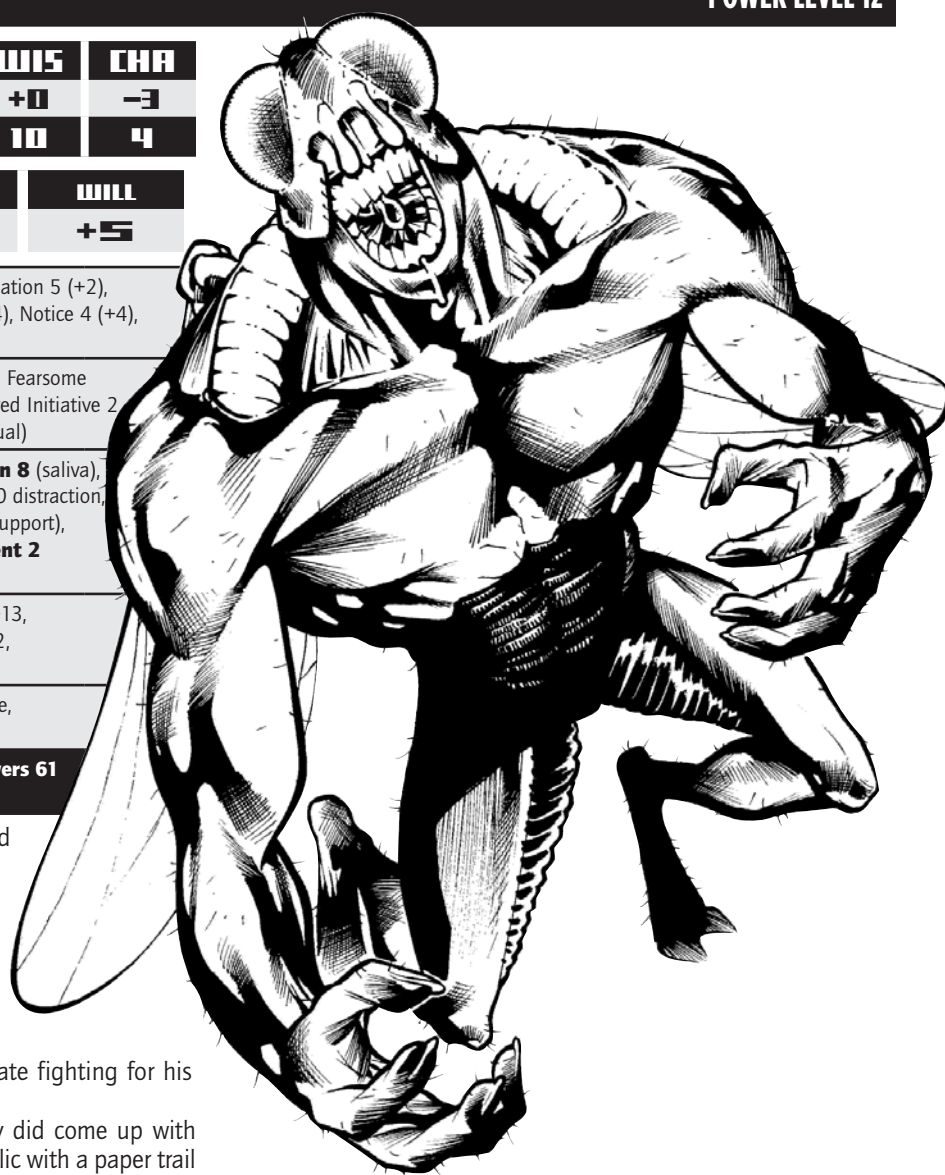
**Background:** People like Charles Maxfield helped set the standard for news reporting in Freedom City. At the same time, people like Albert Hedison showed just how far off that standard someone could fall. Instead of a muckraker, Hedison was more of a "suck-raker." He wasn't an ambulance chaser so much as the type who'd dress up like a doctor and snap some pictures of the poor unfortunate fighting for his life in the emergency room.

Against all expectations, Hedison eventually did come up with what seemed to be a major scoop. He went public with a paper trail of evidence showing a series of payoffs by Mayor Michael O'Connor to a bevy of mistresses and prostitutes, all using municipal funds. It was huge news, all right, until someone noticed all the supposed documents from 1992 were done in a computer font that first appeared in 2004. Hedison honestly claimed he didn't know they were forgeries, but at the very least he was guilty of not caring one way or another, and lying about getting them verified.

This blow to his already shaky reputation was too much even for the *Daily Word*, and Hedison was unceremoniously fired.

After that, he became like plutonium: no one would touch him. Unemployed and all out of hope, Hedison slid easily into a liquor bottle and planned to stay there until he drowned.

He'd nearly succeeded when a Good Samaritan called 911 after finding him passed out on the street and dying. For a brief moment, Hedison was glad to have survived. Then he realized if the passer-by would've recognized who he was, said Samaritan probably would've kept on walking.





Still depressed and groggy from his ordeal, the strange man who spoke to him from the darkness of his hospital room seemed like a hallucination. The stranger asked Hedison what his fondest wish was, and he replied he wanted to be famous, a reporter who was like a fly on the wall, knowing everything about everybody.

"I can make that happen," the voice responded, and Hedison—positive he was talking to his DT's—said "Sure." A second later, Albert Hedison became the biggest fly ever to cling to a wall and Mr. Infamy had the fourth plague slot covered.

## ARBEH (LOCUSTS)

POWER LEVEL 12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+5	+6	+3	+1	-3
12	20	22	16	12	4

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+10	+8	+8

**Skills:** Computers 6 (+9), Knowledge (life sciences) 7 (+10), Notice 7 (+8)

**Feats:** Ambidexterity, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Additional Limbs 2** (insect limbs), **Disintegration 3** (omnivorous locust swarms, *Extras:* Burst Area, Linked with Environmental Control, *Flaws:* Limited to bio-matter, *Power Feats:* Progression 7–3000 ft. radius), **Environmental Control 12** (locust swarms, DC 10 distraction), **Flight 3**, **Immunity 9** (life support), **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Strike 12** (mandibles)

**Combat:** Attack +11, Grapple +12, Damage +12 (Strike), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +13

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (toxins and poisons, moderate, +50% DC, -2 points)

**Abilities 26 + Skills 5 (20 ranks) + Feats 4 + Powers 84 + Combat 46 + Saves 19 - Drawbacks 2 = 182**

**Background:** Bullies were picking on Bert Ira Gordon—again. This time, he was being stuffed inside a smaller locker than usual and suffered a broken nose in the process.

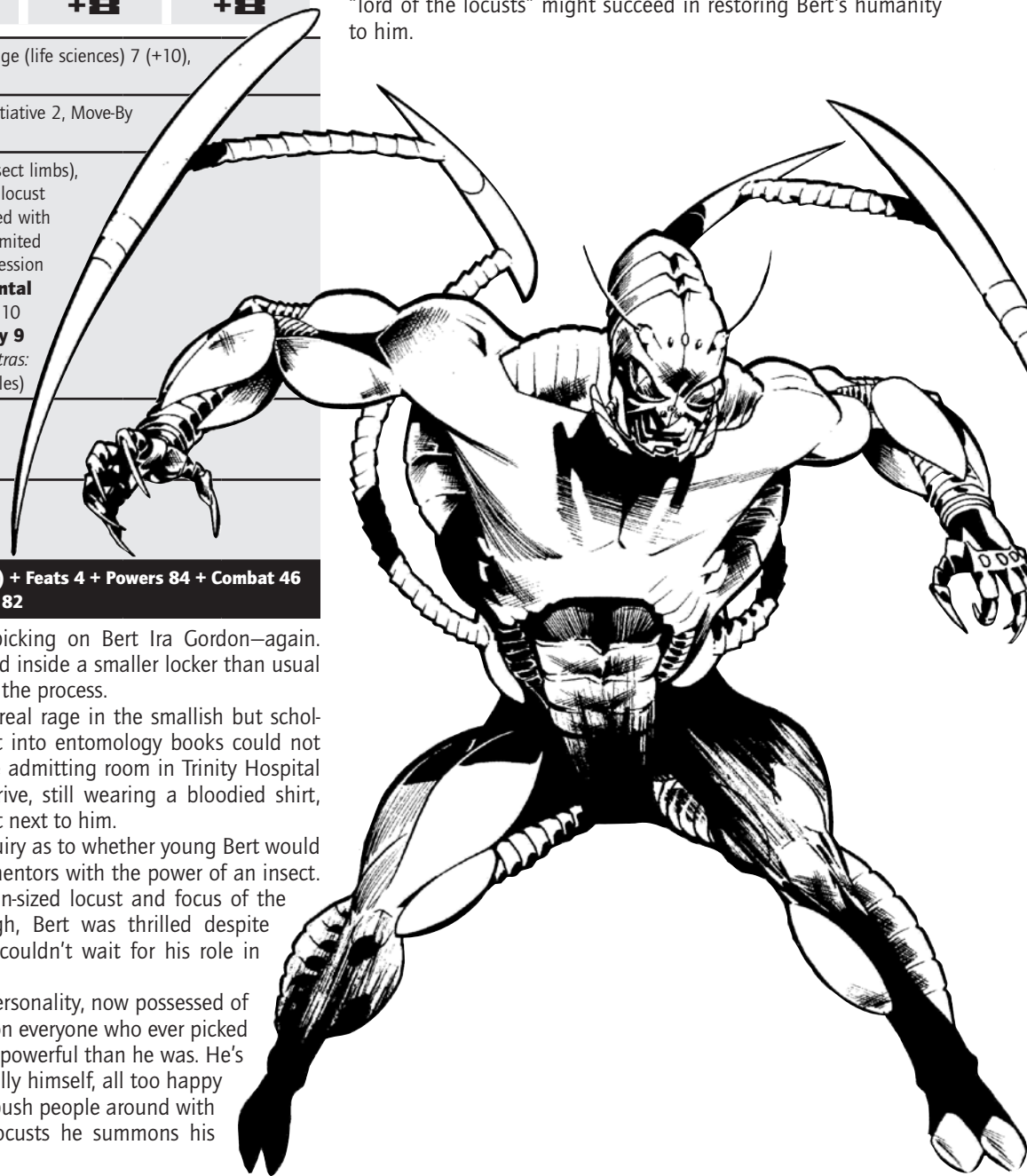
The real injury provoked a real rage in the smallish but scholarly lad, one his usual retreat into entomology books could not squelch. He was sitting in the admitting room in Trinity Hospital waiting for his parents to arrive, still wearing a bloodied shirt, when Mr. Infamy took the seat next to him.

All it took was a casual inquiry as to whether young Bert would enjoy striking back at his tormentors with the power of an insect. With that, Bert became a man-sized locust and focus of the eighth plague. Scarily enough, Bert was thrilled despite his horrific appearance, and couldn't wait for his role in Infamy's scheme to begin.

Arbeh is a classic abused personality, now possessed of the power to visit retribution on everyone who ever picked on him or was bigger or more powerful than he was. He's turned into something of a bully himself, all too happy to show off his power and to push people around with it. He calls the swarms of locusts he summons his

"friends" and will gladly explain how insects are more honest and decent creatures than humans, and why he's proud to be more associated with them than humanity.

Still, deep down, Bert Gordon only wants to be understood and appreciated for who he is, treated like a person rather than a target. Heroes who appeal to the scared, bookish kid inside the "lord of the locusts" might succeed in restoring Bert's humanity to him.



**BARAD (HAIL)****POWER LEVEL 12**

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+4	+6	+1	+1	+5
12	18	22	12	12	20

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+10	+8	+4

**Skills:** Bluff 4 (+9), Craft (artistic) 4 (+5), Knowledge (popular culture) 4 (+5)

**Feats:** Attractive 4, Distract, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action, Taunt

**Powers:** **Cold Control 12** (Alternate Powers: **Blast 10** [cold/ice, Extras: Burst Area, Flaws: Touch Range, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000' radius], **Create Object 12** [ice shapes], **Drain Toughness 12** [Extras: Ranged, Flaws: Limited to objects], **Environmental Control 12** [hailstorm, DC 10 distraction], **Environmental Control 12** [ice storm, DC 10 hamper movement], **Obscure 10** [visual, blinding snow, Extras: Burst Area, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000 ft. radius], **Snare 10** [ice bonds, Extras: Burst Area, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000 ft. radius]), **Flight 4**, **Immunity 9** (life support), **Protection 6** (Extras: Impervious)

**Combat:** Attack +12, Grapple +13, Damage +10 (Blast), +1 (unarmed), Defense +12, Knockback –9, Initiative +12

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (heat and flame, moderate, +50% DC, –3 points)

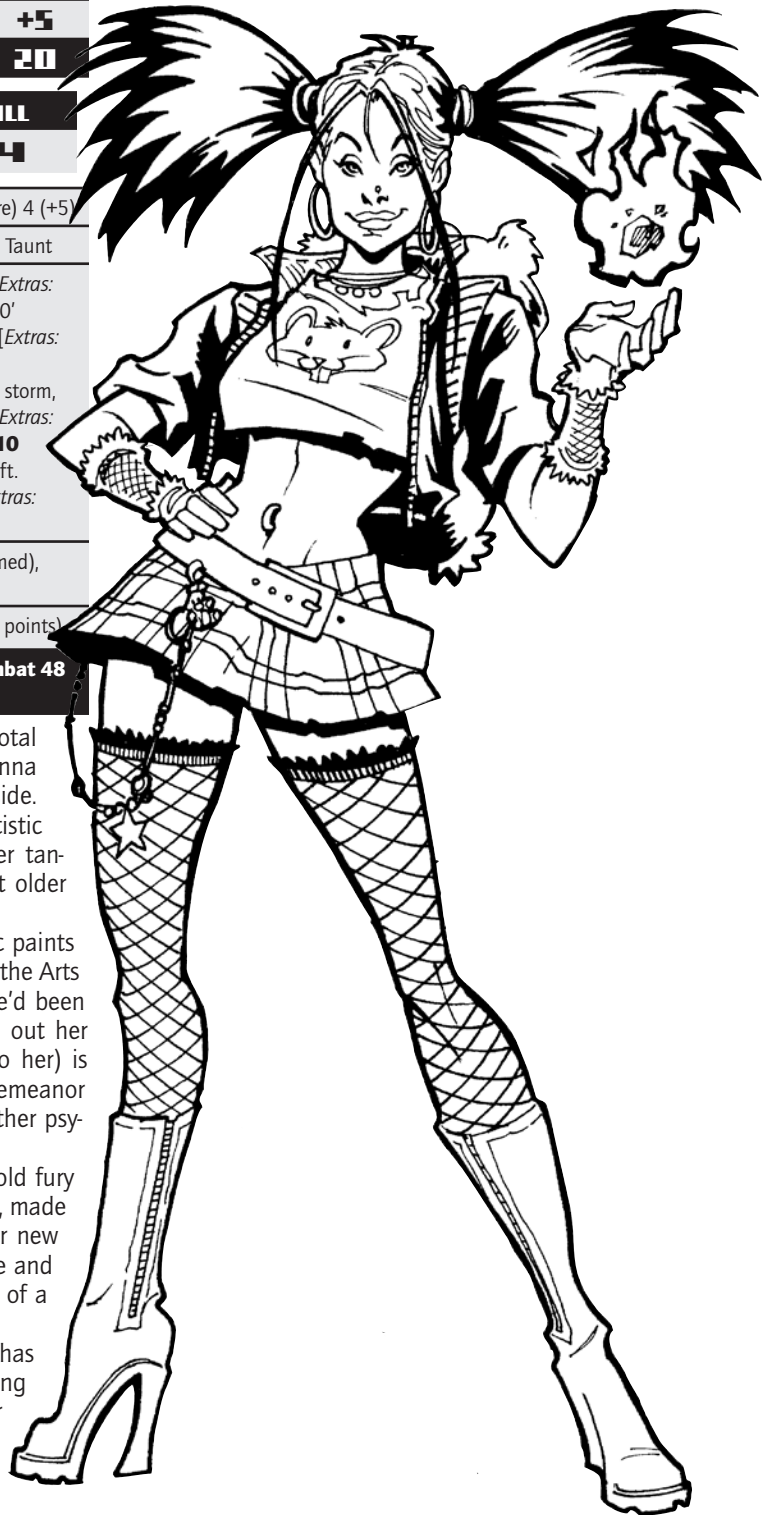
**Abilities 36 + Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 77 + Combat 48 + Saves 12 = 185**

**Background:** At best, a person would have to be a total flake to volunteer for Armageddon duty, but Susanna Whiteacre always leaned towards the “just plain nuts” side. Even as a child, Susanna had a volatile and sensitive artistic temperament. Her family did nothing to discourage her tantrums or her wild side, which only got worst as she got older and sought to become a “true artist.”

A total disregard for the hazards of working with toxic paints and multiple firm rejections from the Freedom School for the Arts have done little for Susanna’s mental state. The fact she’d been taken to Trinity Hospital after tossing a burning couch out her apartment window (for “artistic reasons” known only to her) is proof. Susanna faced the latest in a long series of misdemeanor charges and brushes with the law, to say nothing of further psychiatric evaluation.

So Mr. Infamy’s offer of the opportunity to take her cold fury and manifest it in the physical world was a tempting one, made more so by the opportunity to turn devastation into her new medium, with all of Freedom City as her new canvas. Fire and devastation will rain down, with Barad as the conductor of a symphony of chaos.

Susanna is uncontrolled and unleashed emotion. She has a sociopath’s disregard for the suffering of others, seeing it all as part of some bigger artistic drama, like a play or a story she’s creating rather than anything real. She’s petulant and angered by any denial of her own wants and needs, thus her childish outbursts and fits of temper. In some regards she wants someone who “gets her” and her “artistic genius” but what she’s really always needed was some discipline and guidance to help her control herself.





## CHOSEHECH (DARKNESS)

POWER LEVEL 12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+6	+1	+2	+1
14	16	22	12	14	12

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+10	+8	+10

**Skills:** Intimidate 3 (+4), Knowledge (current events) 5 (+6), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 5 (+6), Notice 3 (+4)

**Feats:** Fearsome Presence 3, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Darkness Control 12** (Alternate Powers [all Dynamic]: **Animate Objects 10** [shadows, Power Feats: Progression 4 (25 constructs)], **Blast 10** [Extras: Burst Area, Flaws: Touch Range, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000 ft. radius], **Create Object 12** [shadow constructs], **Dazzle 10** [visual, Extras: Burst Area, Flaws: Touch Range, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000 ft. radius], **Drain Constitution 12** [life-energy drain, Extras: Total Fade], **ESP 12** [visual and auditory, Flaws: Medium—darkness or shadows, Power Feats: Dimensional 3, Progression 7 (30,000' range), Subtle 2], **Fatigue 10** [energy drain, Extras: Burst Area, Sleep, Flaws: Touch Range, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000' radius], **Snare 10** [Extras: Burst Area, Flaws: Touch Range, Power Feats: Progression 4–1000' radius], **Teleport 12** [Extras: Accurate, Flaws: Medium—darkness or shadows], **Flight 4**, **Immunity 13** (life support, darkness and light power descriptors), **Protection 6** (Extras: Impervious), **Super-Senses 2** (darkvision)

**Combat:** Attack +12, Grapple +14, Damage +10 (Blast), +2 (unarmed), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +11

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (magical attacks, moderate, +50% DC, -2 points)

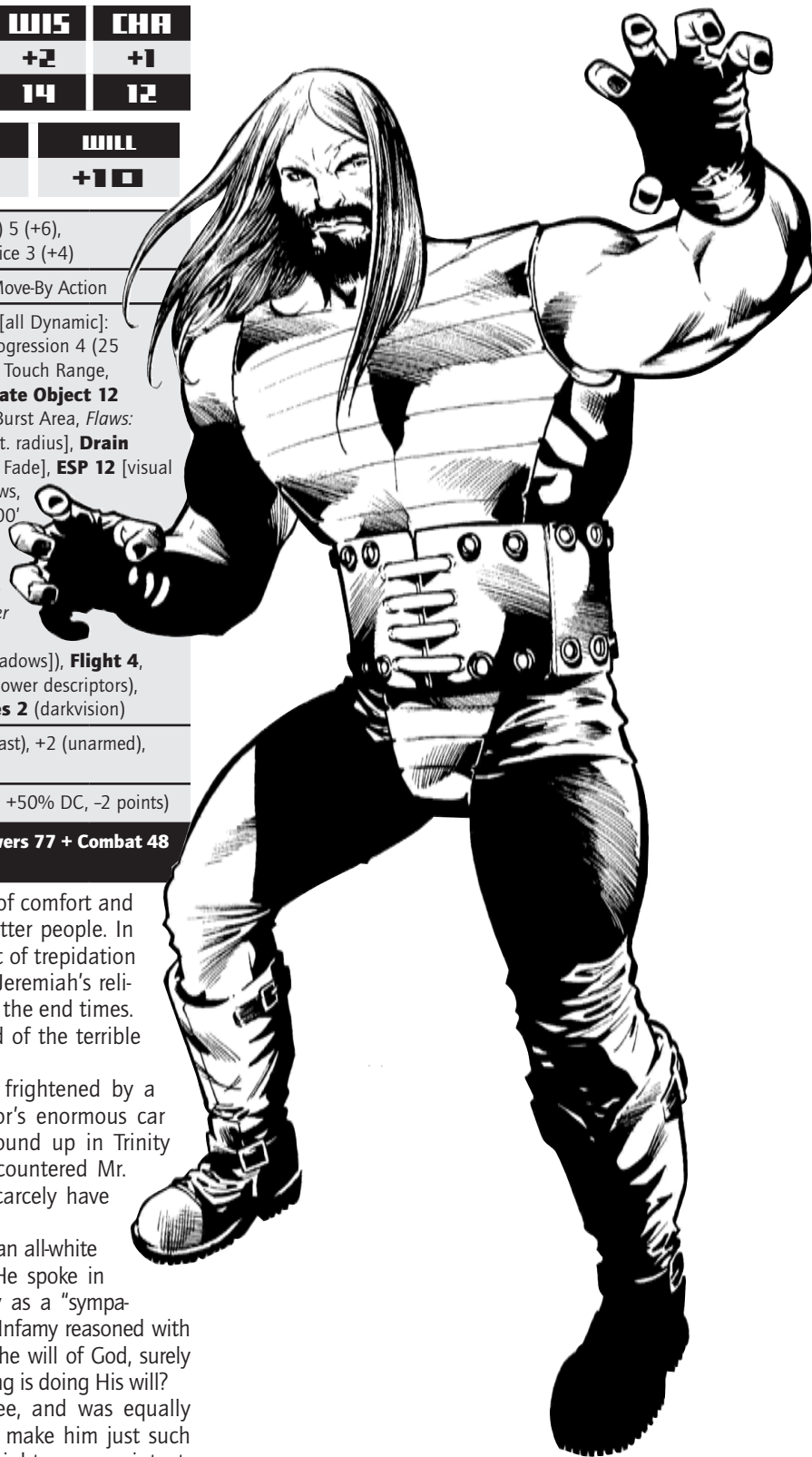
**Abilities 28 + Skills 4 (16 ranks) + Feats 6 + Powers 77 + Combat 48 + Saves 17 - Drawbacks 2 = 180**

**Background:** For most, religion is a source of comfort and inspiration, the thing that helps them be better people. In the case of one Jeremiah Johns, it was a font of trepidation and fear. Rather than love and forgiveness, Jeremiah's religious upbringing focused on apocalypse and the end times. Even as an adult, he lived in constant dread of the terrible fate that lay in store for mankind.

The already nervous Jeremiah had been frightened by a sudden blast of noise from a rude neighbor's enormous car sound system. One clumsy fall later, he wound up in Trinity Hospital with a broken finger. There he encountered Mr. Infamy, though his previous clients could scarcely have recognized him.

Ever shifty, Infamy appeared to Jeremiah in an all-white suit that would've made Tom Wolfe proud. He spoke in soft, soothing tones, introducing himself only as a "sympathetic friend." The uncharacteristically beatific Infamy reasoned with Jeremiah, telling him that if apocalypse was the will of God, surely anyone who aids in the approach of such a thing is doing His will?

Jeremiah could do nothing else but agree, and was equally bereft of resistance when Infamy offered to make him just such an instrument of apocalypse. With his self-righteousness intact, Jeremiah eagerly took on his share of bringing about the end of the world in the form of plague number nine.



**DAM (BLOOD)****POWER LEVEL 12**

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-1	+2	+6	+1	+0	+2
8	14	22	12	10	14

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+10	+8	+8

**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+5), Computers 3 (+4), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+4), Notice 3 (+3)

**Feats:** Attractive 6, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Blood Control 10** (*Extras:* Burst Area, *Power Feats:* Progression 3 [250 ft. radius]), *Alternate Powers* (all Burst Area with Progression 3, 250 ft. radius): **Drain All Ability Scores 10** [induce stroke, *Extras:* Total Fade], **Fatigue 10** [slow blood flow, *Extras:* Affects Corporeal, Selective Attack], **Stun 10** [spike blood pressure, *Extras:* Affects Corporeal, Selective Attack], **Suffocate 10** [stop blood flow, *Extras:* Affects Corporeal, Selective Attack], **Transform 12** [water to blood, *Extras:* Continuous], **Immunity 9** (life support), **Insubstantial 1** (fluid, transforms into blood), **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Speed 2** (Linked to Insubstantial)

**Combat:** Attack +7, Grapple +6, Damage -1 (unarmed), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +10

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (cold, moderate, +50% DC, -3 points), Vulnerable (heat and flame, moderate, +50% DC, -3 points)

**Abilities 20 + Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 9 + Powers 83 + Combat 38 + Saves 18 - Drawbacks 6 = 165**

**Background:** Nobody understood Constance Mason: not her self-absorbed parents, not her boring teachers, and not her so-called "friends" at high school. The whole freakin' *world* seemed to be against her, so she rebelled against it with everything she had. Connie shed anything in her wardrobe that wasn't black. She got a new tattoo or piercing seemingly every time she snuck out of the family McMansion, just to show how different she was from everybody else. Still, no one took much notice.

It wasn't until she started to cut herself that people started to pay attention to her. The first time she did it landed her in Providence Asylum, courtesy of her panicky parents (who thought it was some kind of suicide attempt). After that, all Connie's parents and stepparents showered her with gifts and attention, accompanied by a legion of therapists, counselors, and psychiatrists. For her, the razor blade was the key, and the blood was her power.

At least it was until her family got bored with her outbursts, and again left her on her own. Even after Connie really did try to kill herself, her cry for attention left her alone and bandaged up in Trinity Hospital, where her parents quickly and quietly dropped her off to avoid publicity. That's when the guy in the awesome all-black suit showed up, the one with the wicked cool screen name, "Mr. Infamy." He promised her that if she agreed to his terms, everyone in Freedom City would notice her. Connie accepted and was transformed into the avatar of the first plague. Once again, blood was her route to power.





**DEVER (DISEASE LEADING TO FAMINE)****POWER LEVEL 12**

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-3	+1	+6	+0	+0	-1
4	12	22	10	10	8

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+9	+5	+4

**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+2), Computers 3 (+3), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+3), Notice 3 (+3)

**Feats:** Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Disintegration 3** (destroy foodstuffs, *Extras:* Burst Area, *Flaws:* Limited to food, *Power Feats:* Progression 7 [3,000 ft. radius]), **Immunity 9** (life support), **Life Control 10** (*Extras:* Burst Area, Move Action; *Power Feats:* Progression 3–250 ft. radius; *Alternate Powers* [both Burst Area and Progression 3–250 ft. radius]: **Emotion Control 10** [*Extras:* Move Action, Continuous, Selective Attack, *Flaws:* Limited to despair], **Transform 10** [emaciate beings, *Extras:* Continuous,], **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Strike 12** (preternaturally sharp teeth and nails)

**Combat:** Attack +12, Grapple +9, Damage +12 (Strike), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +9

**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (physical attacks, moderate, +50% DC, -4 points)

**Abilities 16 + Skills 8 (32 ranks) + Feats 23 + Powers 61 + Combat 46 + Saves 21 - Drawbacks 2 = 181**

**Background:** Cassandra Starling wanted to be thin and pretty more than anything else. One glance at her was enough to convince anyone she'd gotten her wish. Everyone but Cassie herself, that is. For her, "thin and pretty" were inseparable, and even if she was the latter, nothing in the world could convince her she was the former. Her poor self-image led to anorexia, attempted suicides, and a life in and out of various health-care facilities.

All eighty pounds of Cassie were in Trinity Hospital's intensive care unit, her eyes fixated on the IV drip that tethered her to life, when Mr. Infamy entered the room. He wasted no time in offering her the body her distorted perceptions wanted, but with a small condition attached. To get her heart's desire, Cassie had to help him share this gift with everyone else in the city.

To smile and nod took all of Cassie's strength, but afterwards she arose from her hospital bed feeling better than she could ever remember. She was little more than a walking skeleton, and Cassie couldn't have been happier. Mr. Infamy led her away, the fifth of the plagues his scheme required, with Cassie eager to make all the people in Freedom City as pretty as she was.



## KINIM (FLEAS)

POWER LEVEL 12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+6	+1	+0	-3
14	16	22	12	10	4

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+10	+6	+6

**Skills:** Intimidate 4 (+1), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+5)

**Feats:** Ambidexterity, Attack Focus (melee) 4, Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Additional Limbs 2** (insect legs), **Drain Constitution 8** (plague infection, *Extras:* Burst Area, Disease, Linked to Nauseate, *Power Feats:* Incurable, Progression 4 [800 ft. radius]), **Immunity 9** (life support), **Leaping 12**, **Nauseate 8** (swarm of biting fleas, *Extras:* Burst Area, Progression 4 [800 ft. radius]), **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Strike 10** (bite, *Power Feats:* Mighty), **Super-Senses 4** (tactile blindsight)

**Combat:** Attack +9 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +11, Damage +12 (bite), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +11

**Drawbacks:** Disability (blind, -1 points), Vulnerable (toxins and poisons, moderate, +50% DC, -2 points)

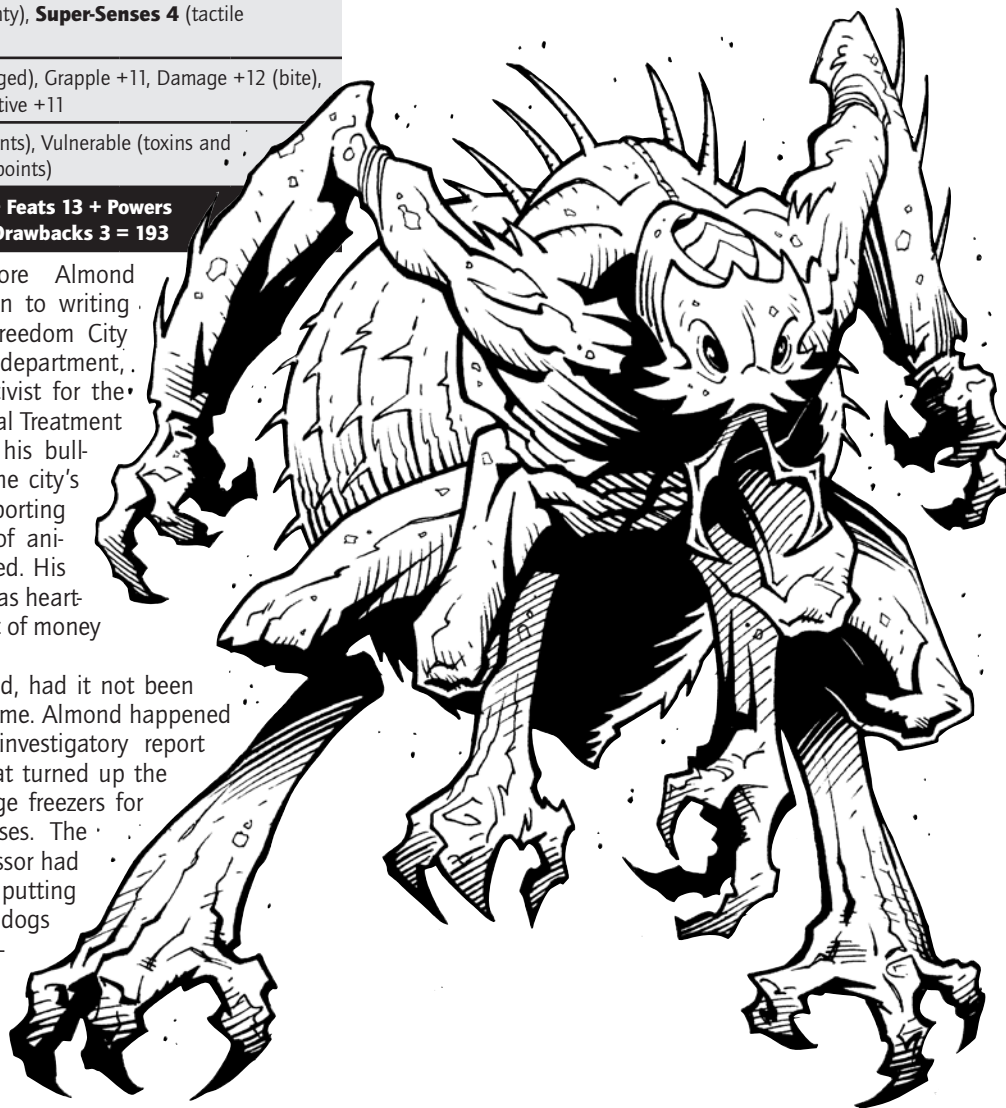
**Abilities 18 + Skills 3 (12 ranks) + Feats 13 + Powers 115 + Combat 34 + Saves 13 - Drawbacks 3 = 193**

**Background:** Ernest Theodore Almond II lived a busy life. In addition to writing and lecturing as a chair of Freedom City University's peace studies department, Almond was an outspoken activist for the group Scholars for Ethical Animal Treatment (SEAT). Professor Almond and his bull-horn were common sights at the city's restaurants, clothing stores, sporting events, or wherever else acts of animal oppression were perpetuated. His advocacy wasn't subtle, but it was heart-felt, and attracted a fair amount of money and new members to SEAT.

Thus he would have remained, had it not been for one rare quiet evening at home. Almond happened upon a WNRQ Channel 25 investigatory report into SEAT's tax returns, one that turned up the group's purchase of several large freezers for the storage of animal carcasses. The organization to which the professor had devoted his life to was in truth putting to death the majority of the dogs and cats it claimed to have "rescued."

The next thing he knew, Professor Almond awoke in Trinity Hospital, suffering from shock and the crushing weight of a guilty conscience. He had been duped into aiding the very activities he deplored. How he could possibly atone for his sins and make those who'd murdered all those helpless puppies and kittens answer for their crimes?

Professional Almond was nearly done mentally composing his strongly worded op-ed piece for the *Freedom Ledger* when a smartly dressed (but leather-free) gentleman entered his room. This kindred spirit known only as "Mr. Infamy" (must be a militant activist evading the FBI, the professor reasoned) offered to help Almond "teach everyone a lesson about animal rights," including SEAT. All the professor had to do was assent to "always being close to dogs and cats." One enthusiastic "Yes!" later, and the professor arose to find himself transformed into a man-sized flea, representative of the third plague.





## SHKHIN (BOILS)

POWER LEVEL 12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+4	+6	+0	+0	+1
16	18	22	10	10	12

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+10	+6	+4

**Skills:** Bluff 3 (+4), Computers 3 (+3), Diplomacy 3 (+4), Gather Information 3 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+5), Knowledge (current events) 3 (+3), Notice 3 (+3), Profession (office worker) 3 (+3), Sense Motive 3 (+3)

**Feats:** Fearsome Presence 4, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Environmental Control 12** (inflict itching boils, DC 10 distraction), **Immunity 9** (life support), **Life Control 10** (Extras: Burst Area, Move Action; *Power Feats:* Progression 3–250 ft. radius; *Alternate Powers* [both Burst Area and Progression 3–250 ft. radius]: **Emotion Control 10** [Extras: Move Action, Continuous, Selective Attack, *Flaws:* Limited to despair], **Transform 10** [hideous boils, Extras: Continuous], **Protection 6** (Extras: Impervious)

**Combat:** Attack +6, Grapple +9, Damage +3 (unarmed), Defense +12, Knockback -9, Initiative +12

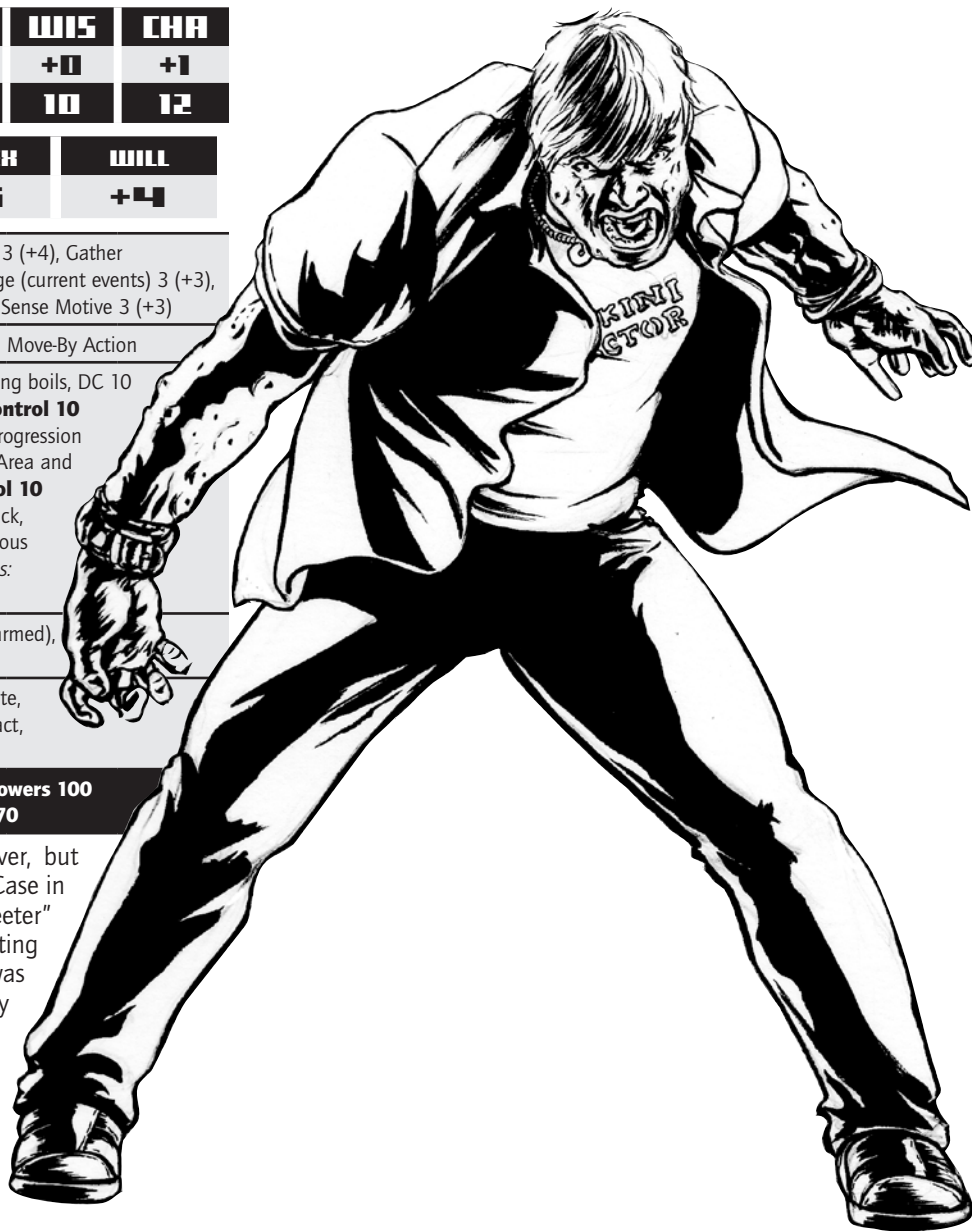
**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (physical attacks, moderate, +50% DC, -4 points), Weakness (physical contact, moderate, -4 points)

**Abilities 18 + Skills 7 (28 ranks) + Feats 7 + Powers 100 + Combat 36 + Saves 10 - Drawbacks 8 = 170**

**Background:** People don't stay 21 forever, but that never stops some people from trying. Case in point: one Arnold Edward Quigley, or "Skeeter" to his bro's. Nearly a decade after completing his studies at Freedom College, Skeeter was every bit as juvenile as he had been the day he moved into his dorm room. The only difference in him was he'd grown even more insensitive and irresponsible, leading a life completely centered on "downing brewskis" and "bagging chicks." He was careless in both these pursuits, and it cost him dearly.

Skeeter at first tried to laugh off his illness, then fully explored the use of beer as a serum. Eventually, the sore neck, headaches, and fever forced him through the doors of Trinity Hospital. Despite his usual clueless state, Skeeter suspected he might be ailing due to a past hook-up. Even with that he wasn't ready for the eventual diagnosis. The doctor's verdict was advanced meningitis with an uncertain outlook for recovery.

As he lay bedridden, Skeeter just couldn't fathom how a "good dude" like himself could wind up so sick. He'd do anything to get out of this mess, even make a deal with the Devil. As it turned out, Lucifer was busy at the time, so he apparently subcontracted the job out to Mr. Infamy.



Outwitting Skeeter is not exactly an Olympic-level feat, but it didn't stop Mr. Infamy from baiting a tantalizing hook. The deal was simple: agree to be transformed by Infamy and he'd be cured of all his internal maladies. It's a wonder Mr. Infamy was able to keep a straight face after Skeeter signed off on the deal.

In becoming the sixth plague avatar, Skeeter was cured of his meningitis but had that malady replaced by painful, incurable boils covering his body from head to toe. To be sure, Skeeter thinks the deal "sucks" and it "really pisses him off," but as far as he can tell, his only hope in getting out of it is to make Mr. Infamy happy. If that means making everyone else in Freedom suffer, then so be it.

# TSFARDEIA (FROGS)

POWER LEVEL 12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+6	-1	+0	-2
14	14	22	8	10	6

TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL
+12	+10	+9	+5

**Skills:** Climb 6 (+8), Diplomacy 3 (+1), Intimidate 2 (+0), Notice 4 (+4), Sense Motive 3 (+3), Swim 6 (+8)

**Feats:** Attack Focus (melee), Dodge Focus 6, Evasion 2, Fearsome Presence 2, Improved Initiative 2, Move-By Action

**Powers:** **Confuse 8** (hallucinogenic skin toxin, *Extras:* Alternate Save—Fortitude, Aura, Poison, *Flaws:* Touch Range), **Drain Constitution 8** (poisonous skin, *Extras:* Aura, Poison, Total Fade, *Power Feats:* Incurable), **Environmental Control 10** (armies of frogs, DC 10 distraction), *Flaws:* Touch Range, *Alternate Power:* **Environmental Control 10** (DC 10 hamper movement), *Flaws:* Touch Range), **Immunity 9** (life support), **Leaping 12**, **Protection 6** (*Extras:* Impervious), **Super-Movement 2** (wall-crawling), **Swimming 4**

**Combat:** Attack +6 (melee), +5 (ranged), Grapple +8, Damage +2 (unarmed), Defense +12 (+3 flat-footed), Knockback -9, Initiative +10

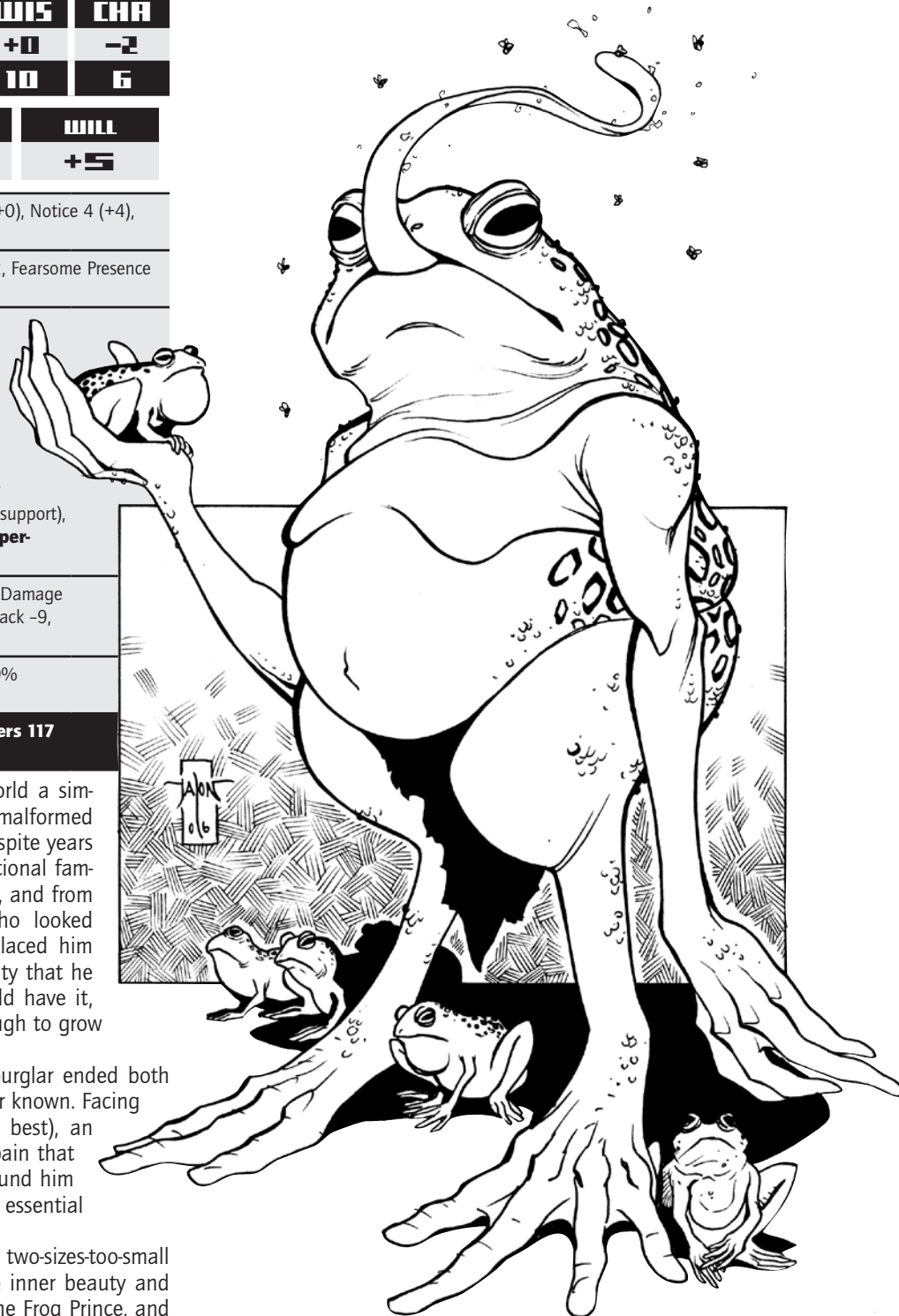
**Drawbacks:** Vulnerable (fire and heat, moderate, +50% DC, -3 points)

**Abilities 14 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 14 + Powers 117 + Combat 22 + Saves 17 – Drawbacks 3 = 187**

**Background:** Rey Milland came into this world a simple, beautiful soul trapped inside a crippled, malformed body. His sweet and gentle nature endured despite years of physical and mental abuse from a dysfunctional family disinterested in seeing to his special needs, and from schoolmates unwilling to accept anyone who looked so different. It wasn't until social services placed him in the care of an aunt in faraway Freedom City that he ever knew love and acceptance. As fate would have it, Rey was without pain in his life just long enough to grow accustomed to its absence.

A bullet from a strung-out and panicked burglar ended both his aunt's life and the only happiness he'd ever known. Facing an uncertain future in care of the state (at best), an anguished Rey wanted to end the ceaseless pain that was his life. Such was the state Mr. Infamy found him in, but despite his rage and torment, Rey's essential goodness shone through.

Not that this touched Mr. Infamy and his two-sizes-too-small heart or anything, but it did inspire him. The inner beauty and outer aberrations put Infamy in the mind of the Frog Prince, and prompted him to offer Rey the chance to be "cute as a little toad" and to punish the people who'd murdered his aunt. Those were the right words spoken at just the right time; Infamy soon after had the embodiment of the second plague.





# CONTRIBUTORS

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## CHRISTOPHER MCGLOTHLIN, WRITER

A freelance writer for the *Mutants & Masterminds* line, Christopher McGlothlin, M.Ed. is a lifelong Virginian whose prior works have been published by PEG, WEG, Guildhall Press, and Gold Rush Games. He holds Bachelor of Science Degrees in Political Science and Journalism, as well as a Master's in Education, from Radford University. For the past twelve years, he has worked as a High School Social Studies Teacher, and he serves as a moderator for the New Gamers Order pro wrestling/game industry discussion e-list. Mr. McGlothlin is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the Military Order of the Stars & Bars, and the Confederate States Army. His hobbies include the Miami Dolphins, MST3K, the JSA, professional wrestling, and classic sci-fi. All good things in his life are made possible by God and his wonderful wife Tanith.

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## STEVE KENSON, DEVELOPER

They laughed, oh, how they laughed at the idea of a d20-based superhero roleplaying game! Those fools! Little did they reckon with the design abilities of Steve Kenson, who spent years writing for RPGs like *Shadowrun*, the *World of Darkness*, and even *Aberrant* and *Silver Age Sentinels*! They would all rue the day they questioned his theories of damage saves and hero points! So, one dark night, amidst thunder and lightning, *Mutants & Masterminds* was born! From his hidden volcano lair, Steve continues to direct the fate of M&M and, soon, the world!

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## MICHELLE LYONS, EDITOR

Michelle Lyons is a mild-mannered writer and author with a stubborn streak and a penchant for trouble. When not scouring the streets of the Emerald City, she spends her time browsing online and herding two future superheroes around. Michelle first was exposed to Really Potent Gamma radiation (known hereafter as RPGs) back in the year 2000, when she started working for a publishing front for a secret conspiracy known as FASA Corp. She's since worked with most of the big movers and shakers in the RPG biz since then, but still keeps her sunny, girl-next-door disposition.

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## HAL MANGOLD, GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND ART DIRECTOR

Hal has been involved with roleplaying games since he was 9 years old, and shows no sign of stopping now. His graphic design skills have been applied to over well over sixty gaming products, and he's written material for Pinnacle Entertainment Group, White Wolf Publishing, Atlas Games, Twilight Creations, and Green Ronin Publishing. Hal resides in Alexandria, VA.

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## DARREN TAYLOR, ARTIST

Self taught Artist, Darren Taylor worked as a graphic designer with Scottish Hillwalking firm, "Graham Tiso's" before finding himself south of the border, working in the Head Office of a large Australian Financial Management firm, utilising his skill to produce a weekly Product E-zine. For the last five years he has been gleefully engrossed in many a private commission.

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## TALON DUNNING, ARTIST

Talon Dunning is a fantasy illustrator in the great Southern metropolis of Atlanta, Georgia where he was born in 1972. A survivor of both Auburn University's Fine Art school and White Wolf's production intern program, he was a regular artist for the *Ravenloft 3rd Edition Roleplaying Game* and other other Sword & Sorcery Studios projects as well as making a few appearances in *Mage The Awakening*. He's also done work for West End Games (*D6*, *Star Wars*, *TORG Revised & Expanded*), Wizards of the Coast (*Legend of the 5 Rings CCG*), Kenzer & Co. (*Kingdoms of Kalamar*) and Green Ronin (*Thieves' World*, *Mutants & Masterminds Second Edition*), as well as a host of other small-press RPG and comic book companies. Talon is an avid roleplayer, comic book collector, movie-buff and all around nice-guy. And yes, that IS his real name.

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## TONY PARKER, ARTIST

Tony Parker is a Phoenix, Arizona based artist. He still loves giving hugs.

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## KEVIN STOKES

Kevin Stokes has been published under various small press comic companies along with a short series under Image called *Shut Up and Die!*. He has assisted with the inks on Batman books while working on his own projects and cartoons for a local newspaper.

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